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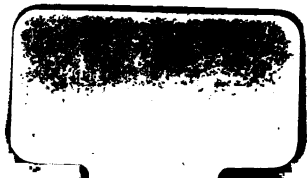
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THE HOME THEATRE



MARY HEALY



THE
HOME THEATRE.

BY
MARY HEALY.



Malone R. 30.

LONDON:
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, LOW & SEARLE,
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A LOST GAME.

A Drama in Four Acts.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MR. WEIGHTFELT, *a retired Merchant.*

GEORGE BRADFORD.

BROOKE.

EVELINE, MR. WEIGHTFELT'S *Wife.*

MILLICENT BLAKE, *his Niece.*

MRS. PORTFUL, *Housekeeper.*

BETSY, *Waiting Maid.*

A LOST GAME.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

The scene is laid in the suburbs of London. Time, the present. The library in Mr. WEIGHTFELT'S house. GEORGE BRADFORD, in travelling costume, sitting at a table, on which a breakfast tray is laid. Mrs. PORTFUL talking excitedly, BETSY peeping over her shoulder. The room opens into the garden.

MRS. P. A yes, Mr. George! these are changes as are changes! You little thought to come back after two years, and find the domestic 'earth invaded by the foe.

BETSY. She's so clever with it all; she turns the whole house round her little finger; and you will turn along with the rest, seeing as how you're a man, Mr. George.

GEORGE. But I do not understand it yet. My good Portful, my dear little Betsy, your tongues

have been so busy for the last ten minutes, that I am floundering in a perfect sea of words, trying in vain to catch at some straw of an idea.

MRS. P. } The fact is, Betsy does talk so fast.

BETSY. } Aunt will not let me explain.

MRS. P. [*With great dignity.*] Betsy, you forget yourself! See to the heggs.

GEORGE. One moment, pray. Let me try to make it out. I will put the case, as the lawyers say, and you must set me right when I go astray in my statements; only let it be one at a time—one at a time, if you please.

MRS. P. } Yes, certainly.

BETSY. } Of course, Mr. George.

MRS. P. [*With still greater dignity.*] Betsy!

BETSY. [*Aside.*] The “one at a time” means her all the time, I suppose.

GEORGE. During my absence——

MRS. P. In savage and furrin lands——

GEORGE. Exactly so, — in savage and foreign lands, to wit, France and Hindostan, Germany and Asia Minor,—my dear old cousin, or uncle, as I have been accustomed to call him, has taken unto himself a wife—as far as I can gather, a young and pretty wife.

BETSY. Young! that’s according to what one calls young; as to beauty—well, tastes differ!

GEORGE. At any rate, whatever our own particular judgment of her personal attractions may be, in the eyes of uncle Josiah she is both young and pretty.

MRS. P. O my good gracious! Who need wonder at that? Why, he is turned seventy. As to her, it is easy to see why she married him.

GEORGE. Come, let us be fair, at any rate. When one considers that she was, according to your own statement, a poor governess, whom he accidentally met in some out-of-the-way place ill and friendless, one might easily fancy that gratitude for his kindness——

BETSY. [*Indignantly.*] See! she is turning him around her little finger, too, even before seeing him.

MRS. P. Betsy, you interrupt the course of Mr. George's ideas.

GEORGE. Well, my good Portful, my ideas stop about here, I believe; unless I were to add that it seems quite like a fatality that the letters announcing the event should not have reached me, and that consequently I arrived here this morning quite unprepared for the change in the household.

MRS. P. All owing to the savage postal arrangements of the furrin lands.

GEORGE. To say nothing of my rapid and eccentric course of travel. Now, if I could gather some

definite idea as to the kind of woman my new cousin or aunt really is, I should be able better to shape my conduct with regard to her. Speak one at a time—one at a time, pray!

MRS. P. You hear Betsy—one at a time. Well, Mr. George, in a quiet way, she is the topsy-turviest woman I ever set eyes on.

GEORGE. Topsy-turviest?

MRS. P. Yes, topsy-turviest! Since she has been mistress here, nothing is as it used to be.

GEORGE. Ah, I see. One of your turbulent, ambitious, high-handed ladies.

MRS. P. Ah! that's the provokingest part of it all—she's not. On the contrary, she is very quiet, talks low and soft, visits the poor, flatters the master, and, with it all, makes a body feel all queer-like with one look of those great eyes of hers!

BETSY. Yes, Mr. George, that's it; it don't seem natural. It is like some very good imitation lace, which one thinks is real until one feels it; but what do you gentlemen know about what's good and what isn't; you are so easily taken in?

GEORGE. Spoken like a philosopher, Betsy. If I wished to retort, I might suggest that it takes feminine wit to discover flaws, where, perhaps, after all, none exist.

BETSY. I told you so. He is won over already!

GEORGE. Not at all. On the contrary, it would scarcely be in human nature to be particularly prepossessed in favour of a woman who has quietly pushed me out of my snug position as heir presumptive. Still, one must be just.

MRS. P. That is the worst of all. When I heard the news, my first words were: "And what is to become of our Mr. George?" as Betsy here can certify.

GEORGE. After all, it is perhaps the best thing that could happen to me. I was getting to be a confoundedly lazy, useless sort of fellow, leading a confoundedly lazy, useless sort of life. Well, what more?

BETSY. Now it's my turn!

MRS. P. Betsy, Mr. George's cup is empty. Ah! how often in this very room Mr. Weightfelt has said to me: "My good Portful, you know my wishes. Let everything in the house be liberal, quiet, and, above all, respectable. Respectability is, as it should be, the aim of the British merchant, especially of the retired British merchant; it is mine. Let it be my endeavour, and your endeavour, Portful, and the endeavour of all in this house, to preserve and exalt that respectability."

GEORGE. Yes, yes; it strikes me that I have heard something very like this before.

MRS. P. Well, this respectability which satisfied

Mr. Weightfelt, and satisfied me, and satisfied you, does not satisfy our new mistress.

GEORGE. That is an infatuation which I can hardly credit.

MRS. P. You see, she is too cunning to say so; but her acts say so loud enough. Why, six weeks ago, she went to a charity ball, and so fascinated everybody with her soft, meek ways, that since then I couldn't pretend to say how many cards of titled people cover the hall table, and how many footmen shake their nasty powder into Betsy's eyes when she opens the door. Now, as I understand, Madam wants a footman too. I only hope he will put his calves in the right places.

GEORGE. Oh, I see—I see! [*Pushes the breakfast things from him, and appears to think; a bell rings twice.*]

MRS. P. O my good gracious! there goes my bell, just as I was beginning to get a comfortable bit of talk. You will, please, excuse me, Mr. George. Are you sure you no longer feel a partiality for plum tarts? He don't hear. There was a time when those words "plum tarts" would wake him from the deepest sleep. Ah! everything changes in this world. Betsy, look after the breakfast things.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE II.

GEORGE *and* BETSY.

BETSY. [*After a short silence.*] Mr. George!
[*Aside.*] He will not listen. It is too provoking,
just when aunt has left the field open, as the books
say. [*Busies herself with the cups, then a little louder.*]
Mr. George, the tea is quite cold. Shall I not make
you some more?

GEORGE. [*Rousing himself.*] Ah! tea—yes, of
course; but no, stop! I see your aunt has gone.
I am glad to find that during these two years
her old enemy, rheumatism, has not attacked her
tongue. Why, Betsy, child, it seems to me you have
grown wonderfully since I last saw you! Just now
I only seemed to see your head peeping over Mrs.
Portful's shoulder, like a saucy little white cloud
resting on the top of a comfortable sort of moun-
tain. [*Gets up from his chair.*] By Jove! if you
keep on growing up in this fashion, I shall soon be
forbidden to do this sort of thing. [*Kisses her.*]

BETSY. Oh, please, sir, Pete mightn't like it. He
thinks I am too much grown up already.

GEORGE. And pray who is Pete? And what has
he to say on the subject?

BETSY. Pete? Why, he's Pete. [*Looking down.*]

GEORGE. Oh, I see!—heighho! No sooner does a girl leave off short frocks, and a partiality for dolls, than in comes a Pete, or a Jack, or a Tom.

BETSY. Please don't scold, Mr. George; it was all his fault.

GEORGE. I have no doubt of it. Well, tell me more about it. When is it to be?

BETSY. When he is promoted to the box.

GEORGE. Promoted to the box? What box? What does he want with a box?

BETSY. You know—this sort of thing. [*Imitates driving.*—Coachman—*don't* you understand? You see, sir, old Dobson is shaky, and is soon to be pensioned off. Until then Pete is odd jobber, and helps in the stables. But now Mrs. Weightfelt says he shan't be promoted at all, because he is thin! I told her that his father was a very stout man indeed, and that Pete in time—— but no; she cannot wait, she says, and her coachman must not look as though the wind could blow him off the box. So there is no telling when it is to be now.

GEORGE. Ah! no wonder then that you disapprove of the lady.

BETSY. It is not only that, Mr. George, but she looks down on us servants, and seems to think it below her to throw us a civil word. Now, a real lady would scorn not to be a lady always. Then

when anything crosses her she looks, notwithstanding her smooth ways, like [*lowers her voice*] some beautiful devil! I saw her once, when she thought herself alone, tear one of her fine cambric handkerchiefs into small strips; and if you knew what French cambric was, which, of course, you don't, you would know what strength it takes to tear it as she tore it. The next day she called me, and said, as I had learnt to work on fine things—laces and such like,—I might see what I could do with the lace round a handkerchief that the cat had ruined. The cat, indeed! Oh, she can tell lies so glibly!

GEORGE. Take care, Betsy, you let your feelings carry you too far. In all this, I fancy, Mrs. Weightfelt's dislike to thin coachmen has something to do.

BETSY. Nothing of the sort, Mr. George, begging your pardon. She's no real lady, that I will maintain. I quite pity the young lady who is coming, especially if she happens to be good looking.

GEORGE. Who? What young lady?

BETSY. Well now, don't you really know? Didn't aunt tell you that Mr. Weightfelt's niece from America is expected? She may be here to-day.

GEORGE. A niece from America! I am getting more bewildered every moment. A wife and a niece in this abode, which I thought for ever dedicated to

old bachelorhood and severe masculine seclusion ! I must light a cigar, and compose my nerves by smoking. [*Strikes a match.*] Well, tell me about the niece, Betsy. A daughter of that pet sister of uncle's, I suppose, who married a Yankee, and died a year or two afterwards.

BETSY. [*Looking round alarmed.*] Please, Mr. George, she won't like it.

GEORGE. Who? Like what?

BETSY. The smoke, Mr. George. She made Mr. Weightfelt leave off smoking his pipe.

GEORGE. Uncle has given up his pipe? Impossible! Really so? Then, Betsy, that woman is a sorceress.

BETSY. Yes, that's the word—a sorceress. Would you mind throwing away the cigar?

GEORGE. Yes, Betsy, I should mind it so much that I mean to smoke it to the very end; indeed, I have serious intentions of burning my fingers with it, to show you that I, at least, am not afraid of your sorceress. Go on about the niece. Is she coming to live here?

BETSY. No—at least I do not know, sir; it is to be a long visit, I believe; aunt says Mr. Weightfelt seems quite nervous about it.

GEORGE. That I can readily believe. He has the most old-fashioned dislike to Yankees; indeed,

is much inclined to look upon them still in the light of turbulent and revolutionary colonists, who are quite behindhand in civilization. If this girl is the one I fancy her to be, she has never left America, and is sure to have that delightful nasal twang for which our transatlantic cousins are famous. Poor uncle!

MRS. P. [*From outside.*] Betsy, Betsy!

BETSY. Yes, aunt, directly. I must take these breakfast things away or she will ask what I have been about. She has an idea that I am fond of gossip. [*Pausing at the door, tray in hand.*] You are quite sure, Mr. George, that you had better finish your cigar here? the garden is very pleasant at this hour.

GEORGE. Thank you, Betsy, I shall remain where I am.

BETSY. Very well, sir.

[*Exit, L.*]

SCENE III.

Enter EVELINE softly from R., looks about her, then glides forward and lightly lays her hand on GEORGE'S shoulder.

EVELINE. So this is—our Cousin George. Welcome home, cousin.

GEORGE. [*Starts up, then hastily throws away his cigar.*] I beg your pardon—ah, yes, Mrs. Weightfelt, I presume,—I am really so confused.

EVE. [*Laughing softly.*] So it seems; not only confused, but actually frightened, I should say. What dreadful tales have you been hearing about me? That my usual mode of taking exercise is with the aid of a broomstick? Come, take courage, look at me, I am not perhaps so formidable a personage as you imagine! Do I really look like some dishevelled witch, like some wicked-minded sorceress?

GEORGE. [*Looking straight at her.*] Like some sorceress? perhaps; indeed, I should say decidedly; yes, there is witchcraft in your face. But in vindication of myself I must say that I hoped to make myself more presentable before seeing my dear uncle's young and—and beautiful wife. I have just arrived from a dusty journey and—but I fear this smoke is disagreeable to you, the fact is—[*aside.*] Confound the cigar!

EVE. The fact is—that you have heard all sorts of things against me already. No, I do not object to a fragrant, delicate cigar, but I beg to remark that the smoke of a pipe is a very different thing. Now sit down, and let us make each other's acquaintance comfortably. I hate to do things like other people, don't you?

GEORGE. Most certainly. You will forgive me, if more than the ordinary stupidity of man falls to my share this morning; but to tell you the truth, I am still bewildered by the changes I find in the old house. The letters in which my uncle's marriage was announced to me have no doubt been following me half over the world; doubtless I shall receive them in a week or two.

EVE. Indeed—then the tidings were as unexpected to you—as unexpected—as disagreeable—*[looks down.]*

GEORGE. *[Aside.]* Is that a neat little feminine trap? *[Aloud.]* My dear Mrs. Weightfelt, I am of too frank a nature to say that at first the surprise was altogether a pleasant one; but since I have had the pleasure of seeing you, it is needless to say what a sudden revolution has been effected in my feelings.

EVE. Let me see—that is a compliment—and oh, I am so fond of compliments! How nice and clever of you to have found that out already. You see I am not at all strong-minded. Now shall I tell you why I stole down to make your acquaintance in this irregular style?

GEORGE. I know that it was from some kind and generous motive.

EVE. Not at all. It was because I was terribly afraid of you.

GEORGE. Afraid of me! you must be joking.

EVE. I never was more serious in my life, I assure you; I actually cried last night because I felt sure you would be my enemy and hate me.

GEORGE. My dear Mrs. Weightfelt!

EVE. That is just it. If I had not been Mrs. Weightfelt I should not have felt so frightened, but as it is I quite think of myself as of some dreadful robber, or genteel highwaywoman. Were you not considered as the heir on the strength of your cousinship four or five times removed, and was not everything comfortably arranged, until a horrid interloper came and disturbed everything? Now you see I am the horrid interloper—I feel so guilty, Cousin George—say, do you really hate me very, very much? I should not be surprised if you said “Yes!”

GEORGE. And what if I said “No?”

EVE. Oh, I should feel so glad!

GEORGE. I assure you then that I am in a most Christian and forgiving frame of mind at the present moment.

EVE. How delightful! What a wise little woman I was not to stand upon ceremony with you! It was one of those instincts which are so much wiser than any reasoning! I cannot tell you how happy I feel. Ah, you do not know how I yearn for sympathy, for affection, and there has been so little of either in my

life until now. A sad life, Cousin George—may I call you Cousin George?—and one which to all appearance was ending in misery, when your generous, noble-hearted uncle saved me, and then offered me his hand and heart. Was it wrong of me, gratefully, humbly, to accept his kindness? Think of my desolate, unprotected position! Was it very ungenerous toward you?

GEORGE. No, it was natural and right: no one can feel that more than I. Beside, I am heartily glad that my good, kind uncle should have found, in his closing days, so glorious a recompense to his good deeds. It is with pleasure that I welcome you to a position you so adorn.

EVE. Dear me, what a pretty speech. But I do not want you to make any more until you know me better, until your good opinion is confirmed. So we are to be friends—not foes; I am so glad, so very glad! I do so need a true friend, one in whom I could confide, one who would be willing and able to advise me, in the difficulties of my position; for, after all, there are difficulties attached to it—that you can easily understand, can you not?

GEORGE. Yes, very easily.

EVE. And with my great inexperience of the world's ways, I have no doubt that I have made many mistakes,—mistakes which I should be so

happy to rectify, if only some wise person would show me how. Mistakes of judgment all of them, coming from the head, not the heart. Oh yes, you will help me, will you not? Say you will.

GEORGE. To the utmost of my poor ability, you may reckon on me, fair cousin. [*Aside.*] How the deuce did those women come to misrepresent this charming, naïve creature so abominably?

EVE. How good of you! I never shall be afraid of anybody again. It is so much easier and so much pleasanter to make friends than enemies. Do not say anything about this talk of ours to Mr. Weightfelt; he has been a little anxious about our meeting, I know, and it will be such a pleasure to him to see how we take to each other—for we do take to each other, do we not, dear Cousin George? Do not speak, I prefer to see your answer in your eyes! Now, if you like, you may go and prepare for your presentation to the awful Mrs. Weightfelt. [*Laughs and gives him her hand, which he kisses.*]

BETSY. [*Peeping in.*] Oh dear, Oh dear! I said she would turn him round her little finger too! Oh, what poor weak creatures men are, to be sure! [*Exit.*]

GEORGE. Good-bye, then, for the present; you may count upon my absence being a short one.

[*Exit, L.*]

SCENE IV.

EVELINE *alone.*

EVE. [*Sinks in a chair with a wearied look.*] I must be a good actress—how easy it is to deceive—so easy, so wearily easy! When shall I meet with an adversary worthy of me, one against whom I should have to exert all the powers of my being? As to him—as to that young man whom I was foolish enough to fear—a few glances, a few words of flattery conquered him! Ah me, [*turns and looks toward the garden, then takes out her watch,*] I knew it must be on the stroke of ten, for here comes my worthy husband; he has just picked a rose for me. Ever since the flowers have been in bloom this pretty little scene of genteel comedy has been enacted for my benefit; genteel comedy is not in my line—in my mind it either distorts itself to a farce, or darkens into a tragedy. I hate roses; I have hated them for the last three weeks. Oh for some variety to this everlasting routine,—to this crushing, wearisome English respectability! What a mad pleasure it would be to shock all these people with some wild words, with some reckless, desperate act that would savour of the old Bohemian days—what am I saying? I must be out of my senses! It is well I

have a few moments left to compose myself for the interview with my—husband.

SCENE V.

Enter MR. WEIGHTFELT from garden ; a rose in his hand ; he leans over his wife's chair, and looks at her admiringly.

WEIGHT. Eveline—my darling, of what are you thinking ?

EVE. [*Looking up at him, and smiling.*] Of you, my good, kind husband.

WEIGHT. And I, as I passed through the garden, and as I counted the new blossoms on my favourite bush, thought of you, my rose, the beautiful flower of my last days. Look at what I have brought you. It was the loveliest rose of them all ; and see, it blushes to find you so much more lovely.

EVE. Thank you.

WEIGHT. [*Takes a chair and sits close to her.*] To me, though I have grown old and stiff in an unromantic city, in the service of that most unromantic of masters, business, there is something singularly delightful in the contemplation of a beautiful flower. See, Eveline, how soft these petals are, how exquisite

in colour! There is no imperfection in this rose; quite down to the heart each part is complete in its tiny beauty. Then how fragrant it is! Why, actually there is still a dewdrop deep among the rose-leaves. How it glistens! My dear, that is the emblem of purity in woman.

EVE. What! a thing which the first sunbeam that reaches it sucks away to nothing!

WEIGHT. Eveline!

EVE. Ah, yes! The dewdrop in the rose is a charming theme, no doubt; but see, even as we look at it, it disappears—it is gone! Ah! it makes me sad that gifts from you should be so ephemeral. A voice seems to say to me, “Eveline, your happiness, which is the love and respect of your husband, is ephemeral, like the things he gives you.” Each morning the rose which you bring me is fresh and sweet; each noon, as I take it from my bosom, it is already withered and all its beauty gone. Then I throw it passionately from me, for it seems to mock me and say, “Soon shalt thou be like me, fit only to be cast aside.” I should like to look on tokens from you that would stand the test of time—tokens that would not change. Dewdrops, yes; but dewdrops crystallized, that need fear no sunbeam, but that would throw back the light in scintillations of many colours; that others seeing around my neck, hanging

from my ears, would admire and say, "See how he prizes and honours his wife!"

WEIGHT. [*Doubtfully.*] Do you mean—diamonds?

EVE. Yes, jewels—diamonds such as families keep as heirlooms—not flowers that sicken and die with an hour's sun.

WEIGHT. [*Looking at the rose.*] Poor rose! you and I were mistaken. We thought she cared for you.

EVE. [*Hastily.*] So I do. Give me my rose. See, it has its place of honour. You are not angry with me, my husband? You believe in me? Say that you believe in me.

WEIGHT. [*Simply.*] Indeed, Eveline, I do believe in you.

EVE. And if ever others, out of malice or envy, should try to change that belief—to make you doubt the respect, gratitude, and love of the woman you chose to honour—you will not listen to them—promise me that.

WEIGHT. Why, Eveline, my child, I never saw you so before. My gentle, soft-spoken wife, who would wish to malign you?

EVE. Promise, promise!

WEIGHT. I do promise it most solemnly—and yet surely such a promise seems almost an injury in itself. I love you so—I have such perfect confidence

in you, that, unless you accused yourself, I would believe nothing—not the shade of a shade—against you. Only it quite makes me smile to see you so in earnest. Such a warm-hearted, tenderly passionate little woman!

EVE. I am quite myself again now. I think I had a bad dream last night.

WEIGHT. I wish I could make even your dreams bright, my dear. Since you have introduced subjects which, perhaps, for the quiet harmony of a household, had better rarely be touched upon, let me say something on my side. You must not, for a moment, suppose that, because I am becoming accustomed to accept your sweet services and gentle kindnesses day by day, as a part of the routine of my life, that I do not appreciate them as I should—that I lose sight of the fact that you are young and blooming, while I am already an old man of fixed habits and thoughts. It would not be very wonderful if the life which seems to me so delightfully sweet should appear to you dull and tame. Do not be afraid, Eveline, to say so, if this really is the case.

EVE. Not exactly dull and tame, because of your affection toward me.

WEIGHT. Ah, I see, I see! If I have been a selfish and blind old man, I have not been wilfully

so. But, you see, it is very difficult for the old thoroughly to appreciate the feelings of the young. I should have looked at my roses, and reflected that they needed free air and plenty of sunshine; I should have guessed that it was the same with the blooming rose who has deigned to let me call her mine. I should have shown her my gratitude by acts as well as by words.

EVE. Oh, do not you speak of gratitude!

WEIGHT. Why, who should speak of gratitude, if not I? But, since it pains you, dear, I will say no more on that point; only I wish you to understand that no sacrifice would seem too great to me, if that sacrifice could insure your perfect happiness. We shall soon have youth and freshness among us in the persons of George Bradford and my young unknown niece. I own that at first I did look forward with some anxiety to the coming of poor Jennie's child, for I am so selfishly happy alone with you—beside, I have a nervous dread of new faces; but now, the thought that her youth may prove a comfort to you, makes me rejoice heartily that she is coming. As to George, I hope you will like him—I do hope you will like him. He has been almost a son to me these many years.

EVE. I promise to like him for your dear sake.

WEIGHT. Thank you, thank you! There—I see

him in the garden, coming toward us. It seems he arrived about an hour ago. Let us meet him half way. I trust you will like each other—I do trust so. [*Offers his arm with old-fashioned courtesy.*] I hope I do not seem too proud of my fair young wife. This evening, dearest, you shall have the diamonds. Pity jewels should have no fragrance, to mingle with your sweet breath! [*Exeunt into garden.*]

SCENE VI.

Enter MRS. PORTFUL, *hastily, from L.*

MRS. P. Madam! Mr. Weightfelt, sir! No; no one ever listens to me now! Who am I, indeed? Nobody, just nobody! A young wife, with wheedling ways, fills up all our thoughts, stuffs our eyes and ears, and poor Portful may keep in the housekeeper's room and count her keys. Drat the keys! [*Throws a bunch of keys down, with violence.*] There—now I feel better. There's nothing like giving a natural vent to one's feelings: it clears the hair. Now let me reason about it; virtuous indignation is one thing, and duty is another. This time duty must have the upper hand. It must not be said, when I am dead and gone, that I allowed queer-looking men, with a suspicious and furrin look about them, to prowl

around the house, without advising the authorities of it. [*Looks toward the garden.*] Oh, my good gracious! if there isn't our Mr. George smiling and bowing before the madam as though he quite enjoyed it; and she—the innocentest lamb couldn't look more meek! Pretty creature! Sweet lady! That's right, make a conquest of our Mr. George, as you do of all the others; take him from us—him as I used to make tarts for in secret. That's right, smile again. Oh, how I hate her!

SCENE VII.

Enter MR. WEIGHTFELT, EVELINE, GEORGE BRADFORD (*from garden*), MRS. PORTFUL.

WEIGHT. That is as it should be! This pleasant meeting of the two people whom I love best on earth has been the greatest pleasure to me—the very greatest pleasure! Ah, Portful; good morning to you!

MRS. P. My duty to you, sir. Glad to see you looking so well.

WEIGHT. Happiness, happiness, Portful; that is the best medicine ever invented.

MRS. P. [*Gloomily.*] I rejoice, sir, that you are so happy; though, for the matter of that, you seemed

happy enough in the old days before—but that is out of my province.

WEIGHT. [*With dignity.*] As you very justly observe, that is out of your province, Mrs. Portful. Do you wish to speak to my wife?

MRS. P. What I wished to say was to you, sir. I should have said at first, but for a reproof, which, considering twenty years of service, might have been spared, though I say it as shouldn't; and it is that my sense of duty will not let me shut my eyes and mouth when I see queer customers, with a furrin look, prowling about the house, and asking the baker, in an off-hand manner, what Mrs. Weightfelt is like, and what her age might be. I should like to know what business it is of his—though perhaps that is not my province either.

EVE. [*Who has been conversing apart with GEORGE, looks up suddenly.*] What is it? Who has been asking about me?

MRS. P. As to his name or condition, ma'am, I know no more than a baby cutting his first teeth; but I consider, whatever may be thought by others on the subject, that it is my duty to speak of suspicious characters as prowl about at odd hours. He don't look much like a beggar, that I must say for him.

WEIGHT. Do not look alarmed, my dear. It is merely some vagrant—perhaps, after all, only some

poor fellow out of place, seeking employment. Speak to the policeman, my dear Portful, and have him warned off the premises—without any show of violence, however,—and be assured that we both highly value the fidelity and attachment of which you have given so many proofs.

MRS. P. Ah! sir, I always did say as how you were the true gentleman. My duty to you. [*Exit, L.*]

WEIGHT. Why, Eveline, my love, you look quite pale! Has George there been frightening you with his hairbreadth scapes by flood and field? Travellers' tales, my dear—mere travellers' tales! Sit down, you young rascal, and tell us where you have been wandering all this long time. Such an uncertain fellow as this is, Eveline! One sends him a letter, directed to some civilized capital, say Vienna, where he bids one address him, and lo! he is off, waging war against tigers in some outlandish jungle or other! Such a careless, adventurous, true-hearted, dear fellow! Come here, sir, and give me your hand; it seems to me that I have scarcely welcomed you home yet. Mind, this is your home, and is always to remain such; it is my wife's wish as well as mine. [*They shake hands. Aside.*] What do you think of her? Is she not magnificent?

GEORGE. [*In the same tone.*] The most charming woman in England! [*They seat themselves.*]

WEIGHT. Now let us have a comfortable talk. So, George, you did not even know that my little niece, Millicent Blake, was expected? A terrible little Yankee, I apprehend. No doubt we shall have some difficulty in training her to the ways of civilized Christians.

GEORGE. [*Laughing.*] My dear uncle, will nothing cure you of your old-fashioned notions that Americans are the absurd creatures that novelists and farce-writers have been pleased to represent? I assure you that some of the most charming acquaintances I have made have been from the States.

EVE. Oh, I quite look forward to—our niece's advent. I expect to get the latest news of the strong-minded members of our sex, and to get new ideas of —[*she is interrupted by a great noise of things falling.*] What can that be?

MILLY. [*Outside, giving way to several peals of laughter.*] O dear! O dear! that comes of wanting to take care of things oneself. My best hat is in that box; I guess it will be all smashed up!

WEIGHT. [*Getting up in alarm.*] Bless my soul—what does all this mean?

GEORGE. [*Quietly.*] That the Yankee niece is about to make her appearance.

TABLEAU.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

The garden, back of the house ; chairs and tables ; at the side a chess table. Enter MILLICENT, running from L., followed by GEORGE.

MILLY. [*Stopping her ears.*] No, no, no! you shall not lecture me, too.

GEORGE. I assure you, Miss Millicent, I had no intention——

MILLY. I will not be called Millicent! No one ever calls me so, that does not want to scold and—be horrid!

GEORGE. I do not wish to do the one, or be the other, so I shall call you Milly—Cousin Milly.

MILLY. No, not cousin; we are not even related. Beside, I have two real cousins, and they are both hateful—one always scolds, and the other always kisses.

GEORGE. How dreadful! I own I would rather be like the second than like the first. But, for my own defence, I must say that if I ventured to suggest that ten “I guesses” were rather overpowering in the course of as many minutes, it was entirely out of

deference to our uncle's foolish British prejudices. Personally, I think everything you say so very charming that I forgive even the slight—the very slight nasal twang.

MILLY. How wicked you are! But, tell me, do you think that I really do shock Uncle Josiah? He is such a dear, such a nice old dear, that I should not like to distress him.

GEORGE. As to that, you see, you have so taken us by storm that even my uncle has not had time to reflect as to whether he was shocked or not. Ah, Miss Milly, you do not know what your advent has been to us. It has been like letting the full flood of bright May sunshine into a darkened room.

MILLY. Oh, how pretty! Well, since you mean to be good, I shall come and sit beside you. Now, let us have a nice jolly talk—you do not mind my saying “jolly?”

GEORGE. Well, no; I think, indeed, that I have heard some such expression on this, the proper side, of the Atlantic.

MILLY. And so you think uncle really likes me?

GEORGE. I am sure he does; he was always a man of taste.

MILLY. Oh, it is so nice to be liked! Do you know, father told me the English were a little—what shall I call it?—a little stolid, cold, and all that sort of

thing; but I answered that I was not afraid, and meant to make you all like me; I never was afraid of anything or anybody in my life! After all, [*reflectively*] I do not think you English are so bad as you are represented to be! And do you think Mrs. Weightfelt—Aunt Eveline, I mean—likes me too?

GEORGE. You should be the best judge of that.

MILLY. She says she does; but—well, never mind. How good she is, is she not? I met her this morning going to read to a poor woman who is stone deaf; then, too, she makes those funny flannel things for the infants out in Africa; poor little mortals, I should think they would be warm enough in that climate without flannel, shouldn't you? I am sure I should not like to read to deaf old women; but then I am not good; and, beside, I do not see the use of it. Well, we will say that Aunt Eveline likes me too. Then I overheard Portful say I was "a pretty h'artless creature;" meaning artless, you know.

GEORGE. You have skipped me, it seems. Am I of less importance than Portful, hey?

MILLY. You? I guess you would say you liked me whether you did or not.

GEORGE. By no means. I am truth itself; please ask me!

MILLY. Do—no, I will not ask you,—I cannot.

GEORGE. Then I shall have to tell you without being asked.

MILLY. [*Putting her fingers to her ears.*] No, no, no! I cannot hear—it would be no use to scream!

GEORGE. [*Screams.*] I do like you.

MILLY. I told you it was no use. But I thought you meant to be good, and talk sensibly.

GEORGE. Very well, then; by way of being both sensible and original I will ask you a question: how do you like London?

MILLY. Oh, London is just awful.

GEORGE. How?

MILLY. It makes my head ache with the thought of its dreadful immensity. Then it is so satisfied with itself that it does not mind being ugly, I suppose. You know it is ugly.

GEORGE. Is it? I really cannot tell. I am so accustomed to it that it never strikes me as uglier than most collections of brick houses. By the way, you do not hesitate to wound my national pride; but I forgive you. Pray what have you to say against the Thames?

MILLY. Oh, you should see our Hudson river!

GEORGE. That is just what I object to in Americans; they cannot judge of anything they see abroad, without immediately wanting to establish some impossible comparison between it and something else

"at home." I once asked a countrywoman of yours how she liked Rome, and she answered, that "it was so much more dingy and ill kept than New York." I believe she looked at the Colosseum with a sort of troubled compassion, that no amount of Yankee ingenuity could suffice to remove it to Central Park, where it might be well cleaned and restored.

MILLY. Now you are getting horrid and Britishy again. I guess I'll go.

GEORGE. [*Imitating her.*] I guess not. Why we have not nearly finished our serious conversation yet. Tell me, little cousin, are you happy here?

MILLY. Happy? Oh yes, only——

GEORGE. Only what?

MILLY. You promise not to laugh?

GEORGE. Most solemnly.

MILLY. I am just pining for—for——

GEORGE. For what?

MILLY. For—a good dance! I have never been so long without one, since I was twelve years old!

GEORGE. So you think we are a dull lot?

MILLY. You will think me horribly wicked and ungrateful I dare say, when I confess that I do find it just a little dull here. Tell me, does the time pass always as it has done since my arrival? Tuesday like Monday, Wednesday like Thursday, and Sunday, Oh, like no other day! Oh dear, I still ache

with a feeling of propriety and stiffness when I think of last Sunday. Do you really never dance here, never have balls?

GEORGE. I never heard of any.

MILLY. How dreadful!

GEORGE. Is it not? Are you then so very fond of dancing? Tell me all about your favourite partners.

MILLY [*Counts on her fingers.*] Let me see. There were three generals——

GEORGE. What! do venerable old generals dance with young girls?

MILLY. They were not so very old; the most decrepit was perhaps four or five years older than you!

GEORGE. Dear me! promotion must be rapid in America.

MILLY. Well, you know they were not exactly regulars, the war made them; most of them have left the service entirely; one is a newspaper editor—— and don't he give it to the President——

GEORGE. O, I see! Well go on with the list.

MILLY. Five colonels, a few captains and majors, with a sprinkling of plain Mr. So-and-so's; but these we did not care much about.

GEORGE. Indeed! mortifying for us civilians, very. Come, tell me, which was the favoured one among all these gallant warriors?

MILLY. I scarcely know. Major Smith had a very sweet moustache, but then he was just a little cross-eyed. General Robinson was nice too, only he lisped.

GEORGE. Am I to conclude then that you never were—in love?

MILLY. Cannot tell. How does it feel?

GEORGE. If you had been in love, all beside the one you had distinguished would seem indistinct to you; then in your quiet moments, while listening perhaps to sweet music, or when soothed by the beauty of Nature, you would feel his presence, you would see him at your side, even if he were thousands of miles away.

MILLY. How nice! No, if that is being in love, then I have never known love. Do you think I ever shall?—but here comes Aunt Eveline. I wonder if she has ever felt what you describe? You and she are very good friends, are you not?

GEORGE. We were. Indeed at first I do not mind confessing that I thought her irresistible, but ever since she fancied me completely subjugated she has manifested a certain contempt for my intellect, which is not exactly flattering. You see she did not, I suppose, reckon on counter influences. [*Looks at her.*]

SCENE II.

Enter EVELINE from R., a letter in her hand.

EVE. I thought I heard your two voices in this direction. What, not quarrelling as usual about the respective merits of England and America? Ah, if the two nations could arrange their international difficulties with as much facility, and arrive at so harmonious an union—of sentiments, we should hear less of the Alabama claims. Have you mutually converted each other, or is it only an armistice?

MILLY. He has promised to be good, and not to tease me any more.

EVE. As to that, Millicent, I think you need not fear him much as an adversary; he is too fond of his own ease to be very dangerous.

GEORGE. Perhaps, Mrs. Weightfelt, if any circumstances arose to force me into activity, I might not prove so contemptible a foe as you seem to fancy. You know I am studying for the bar, and a lawyer's best policy often consists in masking and reserving his fire. I own that I have brought no very heavy guns to bear against our little Yankee cousin.

EVE. Millicent, dear, Mr. Weightfelt wishes to see you. I believe he wants you to write a note for him.

MILLY. Does he? Oh dear! I must remember not to say "go-a-head" when I am ready for a new sentence, as I did the other day. Well, good-bye for the present, then. [Exit, R.]

SCENE III.

EVELINE and GEORGE.

EVE. I have a letter for you.

GEORGE. Indeed!

EVE. Yes; I took it from Betsy just now. She was looking for you. It is from Paris, I see. Have you many friends in that city?

GEORGE. Quite a number. I have spent a good deal of time at different intervals there. Permit me. *[Takes the letter, which she yields with a certain reluctance.]*

EVE. Ah, so you are well acquainted with Paris? Doubtless your friends are, for the most part, gay young bachelors, and that letter——

GEORGE. Is from one of them? Exactly. The best-natured, most jovial of boon companions, whose letters I should certainly peruse very carefully before reading them to Miss Milly or—to you.

EVE. Is it not a pity to encourage such idle friendships?

GEORGE. Perhaps it is, especially as I must settle down into a serious man, who has his way to make in the world. But in the meantime, if you will allow me, I shall leave you, and enjoy the gossip which I feel sure is inclosed in this innocent-looking envelope.

EVE. One moment. I was once in Paris myself—a very charming city, so gay, so different from our smoky London.

GEORGE. You in Paris? I understood my uncle to say that you had never left England.

EVE. I never left it but once—as governess in the family of a retired tradesman, rich and vulgar. I lost my situation through a singular coincidence; but I see you are anxious to read your letter. I shall stay here and rest until twelve, when Mr. Weightfelt is to join me. Remember, we are to have our famous game of chess at that time. Your uncle is tired of being beaten by me, and wishes to see my skill matched against yours. Are you then such a very good player?

GEORGE. I am a careful player.

EVE. I do not like careful playing. I like to win a game, as my favourite heroes took a city, by assault. Well, go now, and enjoy your wicked letter.

GEORGE. I shall be back in good time.

[Exit, by the back.]

SCENE IV.

EVELINE *alone.*

EVE. Surely I cannot be well, or I should not be indulging in such foolish presentiments. What have I to fear? [*Leans her head on her hands.*] Ah me! it is the dreadful sameness of each day as it passes which is wearing my spirits away. It is maddening to have to act a distasteful part hour after hour, day after day, month after month.

[*Sinks back wearily.*]

SCENE V.

Enter BROOKE from L.; looks about stealthily, then advances.

BROOKE. [*After looking at EVELINE some moments in silence.*] At last!

EVE. [*Starts violently; then, as she sees him, utters a half-stifled cry, and cowers back.*] No, no! it cannot be!

BROOKE. I thought my appearance would create a sensation. You see, it is not usual for murdered and murderer to come face to face, and settle their accounts this side of the grave, is it? Sit down

and behave like a rational human being, or we shall have all this cursed household staring at us. Let us avoid a scene; it might be even more disagreeable in its results to you than to me. Sit down, I say. [*She sits, her eyes fixed in terror upon him.*] It was cleverly done, young madam—all your precautions to avoid detection, admirable in their way, only the dose was too large, and proved its own antidote. Now, I can appreciate cleverness, even when it is directed against myself. Beside, I am too good a fellow to bear malice; only for the future I shall be devilish careful to tie those pretty hands of yours.

EVE. [*In a half-choked voice.*] What do you want?

BROOKE. Money.

EVE. I have none.

BROOKE. I dare say; therefore you must procure some. Your kind husband presented you with a fine set of diamonds some days since.

EVE. I will not part with my diamonds!

BROOKE. Very well; just as you like. Money will answer my purpose quite as well. Beside, I can wait, only you must manage to get me introduced into the house—no matter in what capacity. I am not proud; but in the house I must be. I am tired of dodging your servants, waiting my opportunity to speak to you privately. I have been twice warned

off by the policeman, and you can easily understand that I do not wish to be warned off a third time.

EVE. How ——? [*She stops, unable to control her voice.*]

BROOKE. How did I find you out? Oh, easily enough. I guessed that you were hiding somewhere in or about London—the best place in the world to hide in. I have been prowling about, and employing others to prowl about, for the last three months; that is, ever since I recovered from the effects of that little practical joke of yours. One day I saw you driving in the park with your venerable—husband. I followed, as a matter of course, and here I am. Do you know, my dear, that you are a confoundedly lucky woman? Now, tell me what induced you to leave the old life? It paid well.

EVE. Why—you ask it? Because I loathed you; because the chains which you had known so well how to throw over me galled me to the quick; because my life had grown odious to me!

BROOKE. Softly! now. There was a time when you acknowledged that you owed me gratitude, and justly too. Did I not, when your drunken, disreputable father died, take charge of you? Did I not send you to a highly respectable school, and afterwards place you as governess in a highly-respectable family? True, I took care that the school should

be conducted on the severest religious basis, and gave orders that humility and meekness of manner should be on all occasions inculcated. In that way you learnt to dissimulate, a more useful accomplishment than music or languages. I was equally careful that, as a young and beautiful governess, you should be made to drink to its dregs the cup of servitude. So that, when one day I came to you, and painted in the most glowing words at my command a different sort of life—one of excitement, luxury, and applause, you accepted it with eagerness, and even consented to sign a paper, by which you promised me a percentage on all moneys, which in the future might happen to fall into your hands. What more just? Had I not spent large sums on having you educated like a lady?

EVE. And you—you who still bear the outward semblance of a man, can speak in cold blood of that cowardly, that devilish bargain, concluded between a miscreant like you and a—a child of seventeen!

BROOKE. Tut, tut! Calm yourself, my angel. Tragedy was never your forte. Let us talk sensibly. You are more than seventeen now, at any rate, and quite capable of understanding that this is a matter of business, not of sentiment. You know very well that without my protection, notwithstanding your beauty and talents, you would have found it diffi-

cult, impossible even, to attain so soon the high rank which, at one bound, you did attain. Who took you to Paris? Who obtained for you that situation at the Châtelet? I. Yet now you turn against me! Reason a little, and you will easily see that it is folly for you to try to escape. I carry that paper just alluded to about with me, beside proofs of your identity, and proofs also of the murder attempted. I must have money—I tell you I must have money.

EVE. And I repeat that I have none to give.

BROOKE. Folly! Your old husband dotes on you, and will believe any story which you choose to palm off upon him. Exert your powers of invention; they are of no ordinary description, as some of your quondam lovers could certify. You see, I am perfectly indifferent as to the source of wealth, or the means of obtaining it—money is money all the world over.

EVE. I will defy you! I will denounce you as an impostor, and my husband will believe me. He has promised to believe in me always, and I will trust myself to his generosity!

BROOKE. Oh, very well; try it. There is an heir, is there not? A young man whose prospects you rather interfere with? I dare say he would believe in such proofs as I can produce. Come, listen to me. I mean to make you a fair offer—

give me money from time to time. I do not ask for exorbitant sums, for I am the most reasonable of mortals; and in return I will allow you to enjoy your present—happiness in peace. I have not the slightest objection to see you take your position in the world as the wife of Mr. Weightfelt, only I warn you that if I find myself likely to be a loser, I shall, of course, in self-defence be forced to——

EVE. You are a very fiend!

BROOKE. Not at all. I am a clever man who should have been a member of parliament at the very least, and who is forced, by adverse circumstances, to live on his wits, and—you. A man, furthermore, whom you will find to your advantage to secure as a friend rather than as a foe. You see, I know you too well to fancy that you could sustain the difficult rôle you have taken upon yourself much longer. Be frank—you are not happy?

EVE. Happy! What has happiness to do with one like me? But I mean in time to grow contented; I will force myself to become accustomed to respectability, I mean to grind myself down to it! The old days make me shudder, while they attract. [*With sudden feeling.*] Beside, if I were to leave that old man, it would break his heart!

BROOKE. Then accept my offer.

EVE. Hush! Stand off! George Bradford is

coming this way. It is too late for you to escape, he has seen us together; you must face him.

BROOKE. I trust to your powers of invention.
[*Stands at a respectful distance, hat in hand.*]

SCENE VI.

Enter GEORGE from the back, the letter open, in his hand.

GEORGE. The most extraordinary coincidence, fair cousin—but I beg pardon, I see that you are busy.

EVE. [*With a great effort at self-command.*] It is nothing of any consequence. This—person, can wait.

BROOKE. Yes, I can wait; though if I might make so bold as to solicit the gentleman's good word.

GEORGE. Oh, I see; an applicant for the footman's place; poor Portful's worst fears are about to be realized.

EVE. That is it. He is to be the footman, that is, of course, if I find his credentials as good as he represents them to be.

GEORGE. I fancied my uncle would object to have any but English servants about him.

EVE. He is an Englishman.

GEORGE. Indeed? He certainly speaks like one, but his aspect is that of a foreigner.

BROOKE. I have served abroad many years.

EVE. [*Imperiously to Brooke.*] Follow me, I will take you to the servants' hall myself, and the house-keeper will instruct you as to your duties. [*To George, very graciously.*] I shall be back in time for our game, Cousin George!

[*Exeunt EVELINE and BROOKE, L.*]

SCENE VII.

GEORGE *alone.*

GEORGE. [*Looking after her.*] A sudden change of manner, Mrs. Weightfelt,—a singular change of manner! All the superciliousness of half an hour ago quite gone—too sudden a change, fair cousin. [*Sits down and seems lost in thought.*] There is no tyranny like that of an undefined suspicion, it grows on one; out of mere straws of conjectures it builds strong fortifications against one's common sense. Now, how much more delightful to believe implicitly, to bask with lazy pleasure in the sunshine of confident happiness! How much more delightful—but how impossible! I shrink from the analysis of what

I see and hear, but all to no purpose. Come, come! a little clear and impartial reasoning may, after all, dissipate these vague doubts. I will read this passage of Jack's letter once more, weighing each word. [*Opens the letter and reads.*] "The excitement of Stella's disappearance has not yet quite subsided; this unusual constancy of the public mind is owing probably to the fact that the disappearance was more than ordinarily mysterious; some even hint at foul play practised by herself or against herself, I scarcely know which. You know I am speaking of that stunning Englishwoman who made such a sensation at the Châtelet; I inclose a photograph of her." Ah, that is the mischief of it; but for that photograph I should have thought no more of the matter. It seems very shocking even to hint at such a thing, but—my uncle's fair wife might have sat for this! [*Examines the photograph closely.*] But no, the expression is quite different. After all, it may be but a singular coincidence, as I called it just now. I should have blundered out with the whole story to her, but for her odd change of manner. I am glad I did not. Now I think of it, why should she have seemed so agitated? Engaging a new servant is not usually considered an exciting occupation; queer-looking customer, the new footman! [*Looking once more at the photograph.*] Decidedly,

the more I look at this thing, the less resemblance I see. I will not trust my own judgment; I will leave the photograph carelessly on the table, so—and if it attracts no one's attention, I shall call myself a fool for my pains, and there the matter shall end. [*Sits by the chess-table and begins placing the men.*]

SCENE VIII.

Enter MR. WEIGHTFELT from R.

WEIGHT. Where is Eveline? She promised to be here at twelve, and it is now five minutes past.

GEORGE. [*Laughing.*] My dear uncle, you surely do not lie under the mistake that ladies share your reverence for punctuality.

WEIGHT. Why should they not? they pride themselves on their politeness, and it is, to my mind, the soul of real politeness. Punctuality, my dear boy, laid the corner-stone of my fortune; and it is dear to me, dear to me, sir! Where can she be?

GEORGE. I believe she is engaged in domestic affairs; installing the new footman in the household.

WEIGHT. The footman, ah! I thought she had given up that fancy. It is very natural George, that she should wish to do as her neighbours do;

E

still I do not mind confessing that I like to be waited on by pretty Betsy, who came to us when she was a mere child, and who knows all my crotchety old ways, rather than by a great hulking, solemnly-stupid fellow, all powder and calves. Still it is a fancy of hers, and after all it is such a delight to see her pleased. Ah, there she comes! Did you ever see a woman walk as she does? There comes Milly with her; how one sets off the other! By the way, I have sad news for our Milly; just as she left me I received a letter from her father—but here they come.

SCENE IX.

Enter EVELINE from L., her arm about MILLY'S waist.

EVE. [*Smiling and excited.*] Am I late? how naughty of me! I really deserve to be checkmated by Master George there. You know, dear husband, the famous game of chess is to come off this morning; I feel quite excited about it. There is no game like chess; it takes not only one's attention prisoner, but one's will, one's heart—almost! It becomes, as the situations rise in interest, a personal matter. I have heard of life-long enmities arising from a game of chess.

GEORGE. I trust that we, at least, will not allow our interest to proceed to such extremities. Are you ready, fair opponent?

MILLY. [*Who has taken up the photograph.*] Oh, Aunt Eveline!

EVE. What is the matter, dear? You look thunder-struck.

MILLY. It is Aunt Eveline—and yet, it cannot be!

EVE. [*Going forward hastily, and snatching the photograph.*] Who brought this thing here?

GEORGE. [*Composedly placing the last men.*] That photograph? Oh, it came in the letter you gave me this morning; it is the likeness of a celebrated *figurante* at one of the theatres in Paris, who disappeared some months back, in a mysterious way. It does look a little like you, do you not think so? I was going to speak of the coincidence a little while back, but you were too much engaged with your new footman. Miss Milly, apparently, sees the likeness too.

EVE. [*With difficulty controlling herself.*] You are too kind to point out such a flattering coincidence. Your uncle must be charmed to hear his wife compared to a—to a woman of that stamp. This is how I receive the delicate compliment. [*Tears the photograph in pieces very passionately.*]

WEIGHT. My dear, you should not allow such a trifle to discompose you. George meant no harm.

EVE. In my eyes, it is no trifle. What, because that creature happens to have features which slightly resemble mine, he is to taunt me with the likeness, and I am not to resent it? Pardon me, my husband, the name I bear is yours, and you should be the last to reprove me for shielding it jealously.

GEORGE. Is not this straining at a gnat? these accidental resemblances are the very commonest of occurrences. I once saw a rag picker who might have been my twin brother.

WEIGHT. I told you so, love; George is innocent of any wish to wound you.

EVE. [*With a constrained smile.*] I dare say I was foolish. I own I am over sensitive about everything which in the remotest way reflects upon me—and consequently upon you.

WEIGHT. Yet it is a sensitiveness which is greatly to your credit, my love—greatly to your credit.

EVE. [*Hesitatingly.*] Beside, there are painful associations connected in my mind with that woman and her strange likeness to me. [*Looks down.*]

WEIGHT. I can scarcely understand what——

EVE. Have patience with me one moment. My

past life contains so many sad episodes that I but rarely allude to it, and, with a native generosity and delicacy which I appreciate most keenly, you have forborne to question me about it. But, to-day, since George Bradford has called forth, unwittingly called forth, no doubt, sad and bitter memories, I have no choice but to speak of what otherwise I should so willingly have forgotten. You remember, cousin George, that this morning I confessed that I had once been to Paris in the capacity of a governess. The father of my little pupils was a coarse, vulgar-minded man, rich and pretentious. One day he came home fuming with rage, threw on the table a photograph similar to the one I have just destroyed, and accused me in violent and shameful language of having sat for it. In vain I pleaded; in vain others told him that it was the likeness of a well-known actress; he was unable, in his vulgar and muddled mind, to disassociate me from the woman whose pictures were eagerly bought on the Boulevards at a franc a piece. He dismissed me at once, and from that moment I date the succession of misfortunes, of undeserved misfortunes, which at last reduced me to the state of misery from which my generous benefactor rescued me. Can you wonder now at my excitement?

WEIGHT. My poor darling wife! George, you

acted unwisely, though I am convinced it was through mere thoughtlessness. You should remember, my boy, that the subjects your gay bachelor friends discuss are not always fit for the ears of delicate-minded ladies.

GEORGE. Undoubtedly I was wrong, sir. Am I forgiven, Mrs. Weightfelt?

EVE. Fully; let us say no more on the subject. Shall we begin our game? Let us draw for the first move. [*She sits at the chess-table.*]

GEORGE. That belongs to the lady, by all the laws of chivalry.

EVE. Not at all. This is to be a serious game, and I will deign to accept no concessions.

WEIGHT. Come here, Milly. While these scientific players make their heads ache over their mimic war, let us indulge in a quiet chat. Take that low stool, child; your dear mother was fond of sitting by me just in that way, before your Yankee father stole her from me.

MILLY. O uncle, I was so frightened! it seemed as though it were all my fault. No one else would have thought of looking at that photograph, but I am so curious!

WEIGHT. Curious? So was your mother before you, and so was mistress Eve before her. But notwithstanding that, and your numerous other faults,

miss, it is pleasant to have you here,—very pleasant!

MILLY. In spite of my dreadful Americanisms?

WEIGHT. Yes, in spite of your dreadful Americanisms. You are quite happy here, are you not, little girl?

MILLY. O, quite happy, even without——

WEIGHT. Without what, hey?

MILLY. I was going to say—but perhaps I had better not.

WEIGHT. Say on, say on! Even without?

MILLY. Even without—dancing! I do so love to dance!

WEIGHT. [*Dubiously.*] Dancing?

MILLY. Yes. Balls and parties, and hops, and sociables. Oh, they are so nice!

WEIGHT. Indeed?

MILLY. But remember, uncle, I said I was happy without these.

WEIGHT. Still you would be happier if you had a little gaiety; if there were more young people about you?

MILLY. Yes.

WEIGHT. Natural, very natural. And do you think, Milly, that other young people—young people older than you, but still full of freshness, and of the power of enjoyment, have the same longings

after what is bright and young, as you yourself experience?

MILLY. I guess they do!

WEIGHT. Therefore, my wife,—we will take her as an example of what we were saying—my wife herself might be happier, if I were so far to overcome my own inclinations, as to fill the house with pleasure-loving guests?

MILLY. Undoubtedly.

WEIGHT. And do you also think, Milly, that the occasional fits of depression to which she is subject, and which she, in her goodness, tries to shake off at my approach, might be attributable to the monotony of the life we lead?

MILLY. I should think it very likely.

WEIGHT. [*Pondering.*] You would think it very likely. I must be a very slow-brained old fellow not to have understood that before. I thought, you see, that she might be brooding on the hardships and loneliness of her past life, and I fancied that the tenderness of my love for her would suffice to make her forget them. See how much there is of vanity even in our best movements.

MILLY. [*Warmly.*] I am sure it ought to suffice! You should not mind what I say, dear uncle, I am such a silly, flighty girl! On second thoughts, I am

convinced that dancing is a very absurd and unreasonable sort of exercise.

WEIGHT. Not at all, my dear, not at all; the modern style of dancing I own, which is a cross between a hop and a rush, seems somewhat undignified to my old-fashioned mind; but I have no doubt it is very amusing. We must give a great ball, child—a great ball, do you hear? I am sure it will please her! [*They continue to talk in dumb show.*]

EVE. [*Laughing exultingly.*] I take your castle! Why, Cousin George, where was your generalship during the last few moves?

GEORGE. I own it; that was a brilliant combination of yours. Indeed, you are one of the most dashing chess-players I know. But permit me to observe that you are very lavish of your pawns. See how many you have sacrificed already.

EVE. Pawns! pawns! who cares for pawns? I attack at once the vital powers. I have already worried your queen considerably.

GEORGE. That is true, and with an adversary who did not know how to wait, you would certainly win easily.

EVE. You do not mean to say that you still have hopes of the game?

GEORGE. Very great hopes even; hopes founded

on your reckless contempt for the minor pieces. Pawns, Mrs. Weightfelt, are in chess, what trifling events, unimportant people, are in life. It is not safe to despise them.

EVE. Absurd! One can control trifling incidents.

GEORGE. [*Playing.*] Not always. It is your play.

EVE. One moment. You do not mean to say that if, in real life, you staked your happiness, your honour, your all, on one great plan, you would have patience to look—not at the object of your ambition—but at the small obstacles which might chance to be at your feet?

GEORGE. I should look first to these, and carefully—painfully—even put them on one side, before venturing to make one step on my chosen path.

EVE. I, on the contrary, would spring over them, and clear them at one bound!

GEORGE. Perhaps you might succeed, but probably you would fail. Shall we proceed? [*They play.*]

WEIGHT. [*Stroking Milly's hair.*] So, dear, you would be contented to stay with us some months?

MILLY. Yes; unless father needed me?

WEIGHT. I want to speak to you about your father. I received a letter from him some twenty minutes ago.

MILLY. Indeed! Let me see it, please?

WEIGHT. Presently, presently.

MILLY. [*Alarmed.*] Has anything happened? Is he ill?

WEIGHT. He says he was never better in his life.

MILLY. Then, dear uncle, why do you look at me so?

WEIGHT. To see how my Yankee niece will bear the news, that instead of being rich, she has become suddenly poor.

MILLY. Is that all? How you frightened me?

WEIGHT. Is that all? A pretty considerable "all" it is, I should say. Your father has failed, and is about to embark in a new business.

MILLY. Poor dear father!

WEIGHT. The astonishing part of it is, that, except on your account, he seems in very good spirits about the matter; one would say that he quite relished the idea of beginning life again in the far West.

MILLY. I know he always wanted to go West. But, uncle, I must start at once; my place is with him.

WEIGHT. No; he particularly desires you to

remain where you are until his prospects brighten. You Americans are the most extraordinary people : you talk of making a fortune, as a shoemaker talks of making a pair of shoes ! You do not seem to understand the true meaning of the word "failure."

MILLY. You see we are quite accustomed to it, and pretty sure also of recovering from it. I know a man who failed ten times, and he is the merriest fellow I ever saw !

WEIGHT. Tut, tut, child ! you do not know what you are talking about. I tell you, a merchant's bankruptcy is a serious affair. I am glad to tell you that your father's conduct in this matter has been most honourable—which I should hardly think could be the case with the merry gentleman who failed ten times.

EVE. [*With a sudden exclamation.*] No, no ! You cannot—yes, you can !

WEIGHT. What is it, dear ? Surely he is not getting the advantage on his side ?

EVE. Yes he is. Slowly, craftily, and surely. A little while ago, I was sure of the game !

GEORGE. And you would certainly have won it, had you had a few more pawns to support your attacking pieces.

EVE. I must not lose, I will not lose—I seem to have staked so much !

WEIGHT. [*To Milly.*] I cannot understand why people should make such a toil of a mere game. See how excited Eveline is, and how beautiful she is in her excitement. One would scarcely imagine that so much fire and vehemence could be concealed under so quiet an exterior. A wonderful woman, Milly, a wonderful woman!

MILLY. To Americans, uncle, business has much of the excitement of a well played game of chess; then when a game is lost, they place the men for a new encounter, feeling sure that at last they must win.

GEORGE. [*Quietly.*] Checkmated.

EVE. Impossible, impossible! What! all my advantages vanished into thin air? What! with so many of my pieces left, to have lost?

GEORGE. Yes, in spite of all, you have lost.

EVE. You do not know what this game was to me! You look at me in your cool composed way while my blood is boiling, while my head is throbbing!

GEORGE. Surely the game is not worth such violent regrets.

EVE. [*Turning to him fiercely.*] How do you know what things are worthy of regret? How do you know, in the coldness of your phlegmatic nature what my sufferings or my enjoyments may be? I

am not of your kind: I am a creature apart, one to whom excitement is as necessary as the air I breathe. How dared you stand in my way?—who are you that you should thwart me? The game lost!—and that other game lost too, perhaps! Is there no hope? There may have been some mistake, some oversight. [*Looks once more at the chessboard.*] No, it is correct, and I, I—have lost!—[*In an access of ungovernable anger she overturns the chessboard, and scatters the pieces; then throws herself back in her chair, with a wild gesture of despair. All look at her in consternation.*]

TABLEAU.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

The library as in Act I. GEORGE BRADFORD discovered seated at a table covered with heavy books and pamphlets.

GEORGE. [*Leaning his head on his hands.*] Serious study seems out of my power. What has come to me? I open Blackstone, and it is as though I were reading the words upside down. Then, again, trifling accidents that pass unnoticed by others take a sinister meaning as I ponder over them. If this continues much longer I shall become a monomaniac, or a detective. I really must force myself into some other train of thought. I wish Milly would come down! What can she be about? Young ladies do manage to waste such an amount of time clipping rose leaves, or chirping to canaries, which might be so much more profitably employed near—near their fellow-creatures of the male sex!

SCENE II.

Enter BETSY from L., apparently much frightened.

BETSY. Oh, Mr. George, Mr. George!

GEORGE. Why, Betsy—what can be the matter?

BETSY. Oh, so much!

GEORGE. But what? How you tremble, child!

BETSY. Yes, Mr. George, I am all of a tremble—and no wonder! Are you sure that dreadful wicked man is not listening?

GEORGE. What dreadful man—not Pete, surely?

BETSY. Pete indeed! No, no, it is that terrible new servant, Mr. Brooke.

GEORGE. [*Goes to the door.*] The coast is quite clear; speak out! Of what atrocity has the fellow been guilty—making love?

BETSY. Yes.

GEORGE. I see, he has made our Pete jealous, eh?

BETSY. Yes, I know it was very wicked of me, sir; but at first I liked his compliments, it all sounded so pretty like. He spoke different from the rest of us; more like a gentleman you know, and—and—

GEORGE. Come, come—no half confessions! I see that kitchen and drawing-room are pretty much alike, in one particular at least. In plain English, you flirted with him, and gave some reason for Pete's jealousy.

BETSY. Yes, Mr. George, I suppose I did—but I am very sorry, and it shall not happen again. I didn't mind it as long as he merely told me that—

that I was pretty, and would adorn a higher station.

GEORGE. You did not? That quite surprises me; I assure you, Betsy, that this is a phase of feminine nature that I had never observed before.

BETSY. But just now, sir, he grew quite dreadful. I was shaking the rugs out into the back alley where no one ever goes scarcely, when he came up and said—I could not tell you what he did say, sir—and he tried to kiss me. And when I struggled to get away he laughed, and said that if I only knew who he really was, I wouldn't be so shy, and then he showed me ever so much money.

GEORGE. Money! It strikes me as rather singular that a footman who was out of place a few days ago, should have such a superabundance of that commodity. What sort of money—silver?

BETSY. No, bright new sovereigns; and he said that he could get as many more any day for the asking—so that I would find it profitable to be his sweetheart.

GEORGE. He boasted of that, did he?

BETSY. And oh, please, Mr. George, I am so horribly frightened!—what shall I do, what shall I do? [*Begins to cry.*]

GEORGE. Do not cry, Betsy. Why, child, do you think that we, who have seen you grow up from a

saucy merry tot, would abandon you now? Come, this will never do. [*Puts his arm about her and forces her to sit down.*]

SCENE III.

Enter EVELINE softly from R.

EVE. [*Smiling sarcastically.*] I beg pardon, I had no idea I should interrupt so pretty and touching a tête-à-tête.

BETSY. Oh dear, Oh dear! [*runs away, L., frightened.*]

GEORGE. [*Aside.*] Now for a trial of skill. [*To her.*] Mrs. Weightfelt, your sagacity is for once at fault. The tête-à-tête, as you choose to call it, was of no secret character; on the contrary, I am glad of this opportunity of communicating its meaning to you. Pray take a seat.

EVE. Thanks. I am going to visit my poor.

GEORGE. Most laudable; but if I were to prove to you that your charitable goodness was needed in your own home, Betsy——

EVE. Oh, pray do not attempt to justify yourself; justification always makes a thing—of that sort—worse.

GEORGE. [*Somewhat warmly.*] There is no occasion

for justification on either side. You will be so good as to attend to me ; I have a request to make.

EVE. Indeed ! from the tone, I should infer that it was a command rather than a request. But I forgive you ; you are evidently not yourself.

GEORGE. I wish you to dismiss your footman, Brooke.

EVE. [*Haughtily.*] And since when, pray, have you thought it necessary to interfere with my domestic arrangements ?

GEORGE. Since I have been appealed to for protection against that man. He has thoroughly frightened Betsy, with his vile attempts at love-making.

EVE. Dear me ! and Betsy could find no one better to confide in than a young man, who to console her puts his arm about her waist—how droll ! [*Laughs.*] Is it as a rival that you fear my footman ?

GEORGE. No, Mrs. Weightfelt, not as a rival. You cannot make me angry with your taunts, for I have not yet accomplished my object.

EVE. Oh, you have an object, then, in detaining me against my will, beside the chivalric defence of the waiting-maid ?

GEORGE. Yes. I am puzzled, and request you to help me out of my perplexity. Do you not think it

singular that a man in Brooke's position should be able to boast of his riches, to show a handful or more of bright new sovereigns with which to tempt Betsy? Now, since his earnings as a servant must necessarily be small, it strikes me that he must either have stolen the money—or received it as a gift—a bribe perhaps. In either case, I think him an unsafe man, and I repeat my request: let him be sent away.

EVE. Let me beg you to postpone this very interesting conversation to some more favourable opportunity. At present I have no time to spare.
[*Prepares to go.*]

GEORGE. Pardon me if I detain you; I wish for an answer. I am not perhaps as ignorant of what happens in this house as you may imagine. My uncle, who has been accustomed to trust me with his affairs, especially with his money affairs, for years, has not, unfortunately for you, left off this old habit of his. Consequently I am aware that within the last week, certain sums, varying in importance, have passed into your hands, to pay, as he informed me, some long standing debts contracted in the days of your poverty. My dear uncle was chagrined that from false pride, or from some other cause, these confidences should not have been made to him months ago. It pained him, you see, both in his character of husband, and in his character of strictly

honourable business man. However he said nothing, only he desired you to bring him the bills, duly receipted. I saw those bills; they were, one and all—forgeries.

EVE. You will find out to your cost, George Bradford, that I am not to be insulted in my own house with impunity.

GEORGE. One moment's patience, if you please, before you begin to threaten me. I took the trouble to go to the tradespeople to whom these imaginary debts were due, and to examine their books. I remember especially the last bill, which was from a Madame Dupuis, and amounted to the very considerable sum of ninety pounds. It struck me that for a governess, in more than modest circumstances, this was a large bill. I went to Madame Dupuis; she had received no such sum; furthermore, she had not expected to receive it. I myself brought my uncle the money you required, and, as it happened, they gave me at the bank bright new sovereigns—such sovereigns as Betsy saw in Brooke's possession, when he boasted, as he did boast, that he could get as many more any day from the same source whence those came? [*Abruptly.*] Have you been robbed?

EVE. It would be beneath me to notice your insulting and senseless insinuations.

GEORGE. Just as you like. Allow me, however, to

add that if, for motives best known to yourself, you desired to have the command of ready money, you should have carried your ingenuity further—you should have forged the whole of the bills, instead of taking the printed forms of real tradespeople—you made my task too easy. Your husband is in ignorance of what I have discovered. It would be easy, however, for me to prove it all to him. It depends on you to decide whether I shall or not. [*A short pause.*]

EVE. [*Recovering herself, and going up to him.*] I will not believe that you are in earnest. We have both allowed ourselves to get excited over a mere trifle. Why, this is surely not our bright-tempered Cousin George who has been speaking to me with the air of a judge pronouncing sentence against a criminal! Come, come! I thought we two were to be such good friends. Does this look like friendship on your part? Let us sit down and discuss this little matter. First, I must scold you for this ungenerous return for the great desire I have always felt to secure your esteem, your affection. Hush! let me explain myself. I own that at times I have seemed to treat you with coldness, but it was owing to my foolish, misplaced pride; my position is a peculiar one, and I feared that you might imagine I courted your friendship because I feared your power over my husband. It was very foolish, was it not?

Now, I mean to give you the highest proof possible of my confidence in you, though confess you deserve nothing of the sort. I mean to put myself entirely in your hands by telling you my secret—the whole of my secret.

GEORGE. So there is a secret?

EVE. Yes.

GEORGE. Pardon me, Mrs. Weightfelt, do not speak to me as to a friend. The friendship which I was willing—nay, eager to feel for you, you checked. I will not question the reason you assign for the line of conduct adopted by you after the first few days of our acquaintance. It is enough to state the fact. Since then, avowedly or not, we have been adversaries; therefore, as a loyal man, I say to you, intrust none of your secrets to me.

EVE. It is because you are a loyal man—because I do not yet despair of winning you as my dearest friend and best adviser—that I mean to confide in you utterly and simply. Ah! if in the days when I was free I had met with one like you, one of my own age, whom—— but this is foolish! it is even wrong! See what a weak woman it is against whom you have so remorselessly turned the edge of your cruel logic! You are right, George; those bills were forged. [*Looks down.*]

GEORGE. You own it?

EVE. Yes; and I will own still more. I am a coward—a weak, moral coward. That man—oh, do not look at me with those cruel, watchful eyes—will they ever again look kindly at me?—that man Brooke, the footman, is——

GEORGE. Well?

EVE. Is my—brother.

GEORGE. Your brother!

EVE. Yes, my wretched brother, whose life of vagabondage is my one great sorrow. He came to me, and threatened to reveal himself and disclose his disgraceful history to my husband if I did not give him money. I was foolish enough to yield. You know how I procured the large sums he demanded. I should have been brave enough to have faced the shame with which he threatened me, should I not? But I was not brave enough. More, far more than my husband's mild disapproval, I dreaded your scorn. Pity me for my weakness, but the thought that you might look down upon me was unbearable! Now that I have thrown myself on your manly generosity advise me, and I promise to follow that advice implicitly. I have such perfect faith in the clearness of your judgment.

GEORGE. I own that this is a solution to the mystery as unexpected as it——

EVE. I see that you are surprised. Perhaps you

fancied that I was some horrid woman, who at the last chapter would have to figure with two husbands instead of one, like the heroines of the sensational school. How cruelly unkind of you to judge so harshly one who—— Well, let it pass. Tell me, my friend, what must I do with regard to my troublesome brother?

GEORGE. [*With decision.*] He must not stay here. Betsy applied to me in her trouble——

EVE. You take a wonderful interest in that young woman's welfare.

GEORGE. You are right, I do. She has been with us from her childhood, and beside she is a most honest and deserving girl, whom I hope soon to see married to the man of her choice. I will not allow her prospects to be marred.

EVE. Very well; therefore my brother is to be thrown on the world again because of your protégée. Is that fair?

GEORGE. Do you think that a footman's place is a suitable one for my uncle's brother-in-law? Sooner or later he must be told.

EVE. Oh, no, no! Why should he ever know?

GEORGE. He must know it. I cannot understand why you should make such a bugbear of a little humiliation.

EVE. At any rate he need not know it just yet.

You will help me to find some more suitable employment for the unlucky fellow; but until that he must stay here.

GEORGE. Very well; but at least oblige me by laying strict orders on him to restrain his amatory propensities.

EVE. I will go and speak to him at once. [*Turns to go, then returns with a smile.*] You believe in me now, do you not, dear George?

GEORGE. [*Looks at her some moments in silence, holding her hands.*] You are so beautiful, I wish to believe in you!

EVE. [*Laughing.*] Then half the battle is won.
[*Exit, L.*]

SCENE IV.

GEORGE *alone.*

GEORGE. [*Looking after her.*] A clever woman—a beautiful woman, but a liar. Yet, with the certainty that all she has told me is pure invention, I am satisfied to fold my arms and wait. I have such a cowardly desire to believe her, to sign not only an armistice, but a peace, for that old man's sake—for that poor old man's sake! Well, for the present I suppose, I am free to go back to Blackstone. [*Sits down to his books.*]

SCENE V.

Enter MILLY from the garden demurely.

MILLY. [*Walks to one of the bookshelves, then turns her head around.*] Good morning.

GEORGE. Good morning. I was just wondering whether I should be honoured with a recognition or not. What makes you so unnaturally quiet, eh?

MILLY. [*Deliberately choosing a large book, and sitting down on a low chair with it.*] A sudden discovery.

GEORGE. A discovery! Are you, too, making discoveries?

MILLY. Yes.

GEORGE. Of what kind may I ask?

MILLY. Of a very disagreeable kind. I find that I am somewhat more wicked than a housebreaker, and more useless than a Neapolitan beggar.

GEORGE. Indeed, and how did you make this discovery?

MILLY. Through the medium of a valuable book, entitled 'Negatives,' written by a strong-minded female.

GEORGE. Oh, I have heard of it. It is a tirade against young girls by an old girl. Well?

MILLY. Well, at first it is rather mild. We are

merely represented as nonentities, pleasant to look at sometimes—animated dolls, in fact, or flirting machines. But after the first thirty pages or so, when the lady grows eloquent, the picture she draws of the dreadful consequences of negativism quite makes my blood run cold. It seems as if all the horrible wickedness of the world was brought on by us. We are warned that if we continue to be merely pretty negatives, delighting in dress and balls—oh, how wicked that hit made me feel!—we shall be reckoned more depraved, and more harmful to society than felons. Do I look more wicked than those men we saw the other day—those who had chains and balls about their feet! Oh, it is awful to think of!

GEORGE. Awful, indeed! So, lashed into action by this delicate-minded but aged virgin, you are bent on cultivating your mind? Pray what is that formidable-looking volume?

MILLY. [*In an awestruck voice.*] ‘Locke on the Understanding.’

GEORGE. I suppose I must not interrupt such serious study with my unimproving conversation!

MILLY. O dear no! You must go on with your Blackrock or Blackstone, whatever his hard name may be, and then we shall both feel that we are doing our duty to ourselves and to society.

GEORGE. Just so. But what a pity that your studious mood should have come on just as mine is vanishing.

MILLY. Hush !

GEORGE. Oh, very well. If I must, I must. [*Some moments of silence, during which he watches Milly pondering with knit brows over her book.*]

MILLY. [*With a sigh.*] O dear, O dear !

GEORGE. You seem to find "Locke on the Understanding" hard work.

MILLY. Dreadfully. I am afraid I have no understanding of my own. So what is the use of puzzling over that of the world in general ? How Miss Green Lemon would despise me if she saw me now. Do you think—[*Hesitates.*]

GEORGE. Do I think—what ?

MILLY. That I might put Mr. Locke back again into the classic retirement from which, according to appearances [*blows the dust from the cover*], he is rarely disturbed ?

GEORGE. I think you might. You know when doctors order exercise to a patient, they advise a very little walk to be taken the first day, and a somewhat longer one the next, and so on, until the patient becomes a great pedestrian.

MILLY. [*Shaking her head.*] I am not sure that I shall have the courage to increase the dose, at least,

not till after next Tuesday, I shall have so much to think about until then.

GEORGE. Why until next Tuesday particularly?

MILLY. It is not possible that you have forgotten all about our ball for that evening! What are gentlemen made of?

GEORGE. Oh, I remember all about it now! But are you to have the whole burden of superintendence? I thought Mrs. Weightfelt was too jealous of her authority to allow that.

MILLY. And you are perfectly correct in your supposition; but have I not my dress to think about? and oh, as I went down Regent Street yesterday, I saw the very pair of little satin boots that I have longed for ever since I knew anything about such luxuries. They are so 'cute.

GEORGE. 'Cute?

MILLY. Yes, sir, 'cute. I will not bow to your prejudices any longer; it is the only word to express my feelings on the subject.

GEORGE. I can well understand now, that Locke has no attraction for a mind engrossed with such grave considerations.

MILLY. That might have been said by the author of 'Negatives' herself! But let it pass. You see I mean to indulge myself just this time, because it is to be the very last of my follies.

GEORGE. Indeed ! I can hardly believe it.

MILLY. I intend to go out West with father, and to work hard for my living.

GEORGE. And pray for what sort of work do you fancy yourself fitted ?

MILLY. That is a point which I have not yet settled in my mind [*reflectively*]. Do you think I might be a governess ?

GEORGE. Hem ! doubtful. Do you know Latin, French, German, and Italian ?

MILLY. I took one quarter of Latin, and went through the whole of 'Télémaque,' principally by way of penance for breaking school rules. Would that be sufficient ?

GEORGE. Scarcely. Are you well up in mathematics and a dozen 'ologies ? Are you so good a musician as to be able to read classical music at sight, and to play endless quadrilles for your pupils to dance by ?

MILLY. You frighten me. Dear, dear ! I am afraid I could not get a high salary as a governess.

GEORGE. I am afraid not.

MILLY. You know I might be a telegraph operator.

GEORGE. Why, do you know anything about the duties of such a person ?

MILLY. No, not yet. I am afraid I am a very

useless sort of creature. What do you think of a post-mistress's place?

GEORGE. I am afraid you would scarcely be trusted; you would wish to appropriate all the love letters to your own use, instead of delivering them to their rightful owners. Have you any more suggestions to make? I perceive that the pamphlet on 'Negatives' has not been without its effect.

MILLY. [*Hesitatingly.*] I might be—a matron.

GEORGE. A what?

MILLY. You know—a matron.

GEORGE. Oh! a matron—yes, of course. But—— would it not be necessary to have the aid of a second person to attain to such a post of honour?

MILLY. I suppose so; there are several gentlemen of good standing who would help me if I were to ask them.

GEORGE. Indeed! very kind of them, certainly.

MILLY. [*Meditatively.*] They might require a little coaxing perhaps—not much, though. But then there would be the washing of the children; somehow they are always dirty, especially the little boys; then they so often have something the matter with their faces. It is not exactly pleasant.

GEORGE. Must they necessarily be dirty and have sores?

MILLY. Not all of them, perhaps, but a great many.

GEORGE. A great many; then you anticipate more than six or eight.

MILLY. Six or eight! I have known as many as fifteen to come in one day.

GEORGE. Dear me, how very dreadful!

MILLY. You see I know all about it; there was an asylum next to our place. I was in the habit of taking clothes and things to the matron; she is a large woman with a weak voice, always complaining; I dare say the trustees would take me in her place—but then the salary certainly is small.

GEORGE. An asylum! I beg your pardon, I did not exactly catch your meaning. My idea of a matron differed from yours, that is all.

MILLY. Do you think I might apply?

GEORGE. Decidedly not. I think you must be resigned to a state of negativism a little longer. Tell me, why are you so anxious to leave us?

MILLY. Because there is one thing we Americans prize above all other things—above personal comforts and luxuries.

GEORGE. And what is that?

MILLY. Independence.

GEORGE. What, above all other things? Above the power of bestowing happiness on others, of taking their thoughts with gentle violence away from gloomy and distressing subjects?—of making those

around, not only happier, but better—ennobling them, fitting them for something higher than this mere every-day existence?

MILLY. Do you really think that I might in time possess such power?

GEORGE. You do possess it now. Ah, Milly! do not fall into the common error of our day, and take the Miss Lemons of this life as your guides. Believe me, a woman's mission is a nobler thing than they would make it, even if they had the power, for which they are struggling, the power of remodelling the world. The mission which I mean is Nature appointed, God ordained; it is the great mission of civilizing, of purifying the world. It works quietly, unobtrusively, is quite compatible with modesty, with gentle, womanly dignity; in all of which particulars it is exactly the opposite of its rival. It is one of those great powers which will never be questioned, because it never galls!

MILLY. Go on; I like it better than Locke.

GEORGE. And do you think that, for its sweet sake, you could give up your grand ideas of independence?

MILLY. [*Shyly.*] I guess so.

GEORGE. Then, Milly——[*takes her hand*].

SCENE VI.

Enter BROOKE from L.

MILLY. [*Seeing him and trying to look unembarrassed.*] Oh, George! there is somebody——

GEORGE. [*Also trying to look as though nothing had happened, aside.*] Confound the fellow! [*Aloud.*] Well, what is it?

BROOKE. Mr. Weightfelt presents his compliments, sir, and begs to know if you are going down to the city.

GEORGE. Yes, I am.

BROOKE. Then, sir, if you would be so good as to wait five minutes, Mr. Weightfelt would like you to take a note for him to the bank; he will give it to you himself when he comes down.

GEORGE. [*BROOKE bows and withdraws—a short pause.*] What a pity modern ideas insist on the necessity of servants. I, for one, would willingly dispense with them; they always manage to be in the way. Now it is a palpable fact that Brooke came in at exactly the wrong moment; do you not agree with me, Milly?

MILLY. [*Demurely.*] Yes.

GEORGE. The egregious blockhead! could he not have waited until I had explained my—my theory?

As it is, thoughts of banking hours and strict punctuality fill my mind, and connect themselves intimately with hat and gloves—confound the fellow!

MILLY. Must you go just yet? I find your conversation very improving to—the understanding.

GEORGE. Go? Of course I must, and that in five minutes, or my dear uncle will fidget himself into a headache [*takes a pair of gloves from his pocket*]. How provoking! I must lose a part of the precious five minutes in going up to hunt for a fresh pair of gloves.

MILLY. Why?

GEORGE. Do you not see this hole?

MILLY. It is only unsewn. I'll fix it in a moment! [*Goes to a workbox on the table near her.*] Shall I mend it as I used to mend father's?—then put it on.

GEORGE. Do you mean to sew me up in it?

MILLY. You shall see; here is the tiniest of needles, threaded with just the right shade of silk. Now if you hold your finger very steady, I shall mend it so nicely that you will not be able to tell where the place begins, and where it ends.

GEORGE. I see, my finger is to perform the office of stretcher, shall I put my hand in the graceful position of the wooden things in glove shops?

MILLY. [*Laughing.*] Exactly; now do not move.

GEORGE. I feel quite as though I were having my photograph taken. How daintily you do it! If Bottom had worn gloves, I am sure Titania could not have mended them with so bewitching a grace. Still are you aware that I have received three distinct stabs?

MILLY. Is that all? Be grateful, sir, that it is not three times three! See I put the needle through the original need leholes, is not that nice? Do you think, George, that I am beginning to fulfil woman's mission?—though, to be sure, one is usually given to understand that the sewing on of buttons is the first element of female virtue. The buttons I sew on always come off at the first tug.

GEORGE. Ah, Milly, it is not the thing itself, it is the way in which it is done; it is the gentle touch of dainty fingers—it is sweetness and goodness drawn through a needle and——

MILLY. Dear! how poetical—goodness likened to a needle full of thread; your comparisons have, at least, the charm of originality.

GEORGE. Cruel Milly! If your only wish is to make fun of me, I might as well have spent the five minutes in a mad search after new gloves. What, finished already? What a pity! I am sure there must be a hole in the other one, or if there is not, we might easily make one.

MILLY. Oh, no, the other one is all right.

GEORGE. So that is the way you used to mend your father's gloves? And when you had finished, how did he thank you for it?

MILLY. Cannot you guess?

GEORGE. Let me think. He made you a fine bow like that. [*Bows.*]

MILLY. [*Pouting.*] Not at all.

GEORGE. Perhaps then he grumbled at having been pricked, and said, "Next time, child, I hope you will not keep me waiting so long; time is money."

MILLY. [*Indignantly.*] Not at all!

GEORGE. Then I am at my wits' end—unless, indeed he thanked you—so. [*Kisses her.*]

MILLY. Oh, George!

GEORGE. I have guessed it at last; on the whole, I think your father a very sensible man.

MILLY. But do you not see how angry I am?

GEORGE. Yes; what a dimpling, smiling, blushing anger it is! But I have a particular desire to receive my scolding in the garden, where, perhaps, Mr. Brooke may leave us in peace. Come, my darling!. [*Offers his arm—they go into the garden, walking slowly.*]

SCENE VII.

EVELINE *advances from R. and watches them.*

EVE. And I must see their happiness! Through it, I must be daily, hourly, reminded of what I have irretrievably lost! No; she too shall suffer! I thought in my folly to live outwardly like other women, was to be like them—folly indeed! Every fibre of my being revolts against the tyranny of my own will. But I, too, can be loved! [*Opens a letter and reads in silence.*] Yes, he loves me; obstacles are not obstacles to him. How did he discover my hiding-place? Instinct, he says. Is there such a thing? Léon, Duc de Broyes—a princely name. Foolish woman that I am!—willing, in a moment of passion, to yield the substance for the shadow! There, I will hide my letter. I have other things to think about now. Ah, George Bradford! evil to you be the day when you crossed my path!—There comes my husband. [*Sinks into a chair the picture of dejection.*]

SCENE VIII.

Enter MR. WEIGHTFELT from R.

WEIGHT. [*Talking to BROOKE outside.*] Very well, you may tell him that suffices. He understands

my ideas on punctuality and is sure to be ready. [*Advances to the middle of the stage without perceiving his wife, and looks out into the garden.*] George, George! Ah, there he is, and, egad, with Milly by his side! Natural enough, youth seeks youth. Eh! what is that? [*Puts up his eye-glass, then chuckles.*] He! he! the young dog—has her hand in his, has he? Well, well, it is as it should be; we shall have a wedding soon! [*Chuckles again; turns and sees his wife.*] Why, Eveline, you here, and—why what is the matter, dear? [*Goes up to her and takes her hand tenderly.*]

EVE. [*Faintly.*] Nothing, nothing!

WEIGHT. Nothing? Then what is the meaning of this dejected look—and actually you have tears in your eyes! I will know what ails my darling.

EVE. Dear husband! it is love for you which keeps me silent.

WEIGHT. [*Takes a chair and sits near her.*] What—love for me? Why, do you not know, Eveline, that what troubles you makes me miserable? No, no, it would be cruel kindness to keep anything from me. Come, Eveline, be frank, be honest with your old husband! Have I ever been wanting in tenderness or respect to you?

EVE. No, no, and that is why I so shrink from wounding your sensitive heart.

WEIGHT. Oh, Eveline, if you only knew what this hesitation of yours makes me suffer.

EVE. But what if my disclosures should wound you in your affections?

WEIGHT. My love for you, child, is above all other affections.

EVE. [*Throwing herself by his side.*] Then here do I fly for protection!

WEIGHT. Protection, Eveline! from what—from whom?

EVE. From one whom you have loved and trusted as a son—from George Bradford.

WEIGHT. [*With a cry.*] Eveline, Eveline! do not make such an accusation lightly!

EVE. Nor do I. You look ill!

WEIGHT. My head—I feel dizzy—the doctors warned me that any sudden shock—Tell me again; I am confused; I scarcely understand.

EVE. Hush! we will say no more about it till you are stronger. I was perhaps wrong to speak at all; I am but a weak woman, and possibly over sensitive of all that may touch your honour and mine. Let me lead you to your room.

WEIGHT. [*Rousing himself.*] No, no! I remember it all now. Do you think that I could rest with a doubt like that upon me. Repeat what you said. My nephew George has dared to raise his eyes to you?

EVE. Yes.

WEIGHT. And you never told me till now.

EVE. I hoped that it was but a passing fancy, and that a little reasoning would suffice to show him the folly of his hopes. Then I knew that you were very fond of him.

WEIGHT. You should have spoken from the very first. Tell me all now—all, do you hear?

EVE. This morning he proposed an elopement.

WEIGHT. Oh, George, George—and he was to me like a son! [*Rousing himself.*] But I saw him not five minutes ago taking Milly's hand as only a lover could take it.

EVE. That is the blackest part of his treachery. To cover his passion for me, he assumes the part of lover to your young niece. Ah! how could I remain silent, and coldly watch our pretty Milly throwing away the treasure of her first love on such a man!

WEIGHT. It seems incomprehensible to me! It is true I have seen nothing of him for two years, but he used to be the soul of honour. Oh, Eveline, why are you so beautiful?

EVE. It may be that my pride has taken unnecessary alarm. You shall judge for yourself; let me show you a letter——

WEIGHT. No, no, it must be true; it is too horrible not to be true. [*With sudden energy.*] What!

because I am old, do they suppose that I have lost all feeling—all respect for myself? I will let it be seen that I am still myself. [*Calls in a loud, harsh voice.*] George, come here!

GEORGE. [*From the garden.*] Coming, sir. Is your note ready?

SCENE IX.

GEORGE and MILLY *from garden.*

WEIGHT. [*Seated, EVELINE standing by him.*] Come here, Milly.

MILLY. Yes, uncle; please do not scold, indeed we could not help it.

WEIGHT. My little girl—you believe that I love you, that my greatest wish is to see you happy? I thought that you would find true happiness in the love of George Bradford. I desired to see you marry him.

MILLY. [*Clapping her hands.*] How delightful! then you are not angry that we should have fallen in love with each other.

WEIGHT. Poor little Milly! listen to me, dear. That young man, whom I have loved and cared for since his childhood, is a black-hearted, ungrateful scoundrel!

GEORGE. Sir!

WEIGHT. Listen to me further, Milly: as you value your own dignity as a woman, never let him approach you again; never listen to any excuses he may make, for those excuses would be lies.

MILLY. I will go to him—George!

WEIGHT. Stay where you are; I command it. And you, sir—leave the house.

GEORGE. At least, uncle, let me know the nature of my offence.

WEIGHT. I would not sully this girl's pure mind by alluding to it. Once more—leave the house!

TABLEAU.

Curtain falls.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Ball-room brilliantly lighted and decorated, opening on the garden. Coloured lamps among the trees.

BROOKE *lighting the last candles.*

BROOKE. [*Looking around.*] Ah, they have gone, have they? At last I may count on a few moments in which to collect my thoughts. [*Meditatively.*] I have had no ordinary experience of women in all ranks of life, in my day, and as the result of this experience I class them in two portions: bores and torments. Mrs. Portful belongs to the first class, Mr. Weightfelt's fair wife to the second. What, my lady, you thought to manage your affairs without my help? you never committed a greater error in your life. But for that I might have been induced to remain quiet in my character of footman until your whim died a natural death; as it is—let me think it all over. [*Remains a few moments silently musing.*] Yes, decidedly the only possible course was the one I have adopted—to hasten the catastrophe. It has been a difficult task, but I think I can promise myself success. Decidedly I should

have made a capital statesman; pity the country at large is not aware of my talents! The loves of George Bradford and the Yankee niece were very useful. Ha! the dénouement promises to give even me a sensation! To tell the truth, I am deucedly tired of my humble position. Whew! how dull a thing is English—virtue! [*Looks toward the garden.*] I wonder if the thing is done? I see a moving shadow—yes, it is the fair Eveline!

SCENE II.

Enter EVELINE from garden, in full evening dress; a large cloak wrapped about her; this she throws back.

EVE. [*Angrily.*] How dare you watch me? I will allow no one to spy upon my actions!

BROOKE. Softly! If you become flushed with anger your guests will wonder what has become of your beauty. Manage your good looks, my dear; they are your trump card.

EVE. You shall not speak to me with such insolent familiarity! What if you should be overheard?

BROOKE. Everybody is so busy that none but the mistress of the house could find time for a stroll in

the garden at such a time. I hope you feel refreshed by the night air?

EVE. No; my head is burning. [*With sudden violence.*] Why do you insist on torturing me? Go!

BROOKE. Nonsense, I want to speak to you. Why do you not acknowledge the truth? You are sick of this life.

EVE. And what if I am? I will not give it up—I will not, I will not! Listen to me: if you do not change your manner, I will have you dismissed like any other troublesome servant. Every day my husband is more in my power. I do not fear you; do your worst.

BROOKE. Perhaps, Mrs. Weightfelt, the day may come when you will repent your violence.

EVE. Words signify but little between us. Let us come to an agreement: leave this house, and I promise to supply you with money.

BROOKE. I will consider your offer. It is possible that I may consent to go before long; my residence here has not been particularly agreeable.

EVE. Hush! there is some one coming.

[*Exeunt L.*]

SCENE III.

Enter MILLY in ball dress from R.

MILLY. [*Peeping in.*] No one here? What a foolish girl I am! I actually fancied I would see George, when I peeped in! I am sure I heard voices. Poor dear George! Five whole days of absence—and only five letters by way of consolation! [*Sighs.*] I suppose I am very wicked, I ought to think of nothing else, and yet—I cannot help longing for a waltz—and oh what a duck of a dress this is!

SCENE IV.

Enter GEORGE hastily from garden. MILLY seeing him, hides.

GEORGE. [*Reading a letter.*] This is horrible! What ought I to do? What must I do?

MILLY. [*Goes behind him and puts her hands over his eyes.*] There now—guess who I am!

GEORGE. Queen Mab—or Milly. I am sure these dainty fingers must belong to one or the other.

MILLY. How clever of you, George! Now, if you promise to be very good you may look at me.

GEORGE. [*Looking at her critically.*] Are you

aware, young lady, that you look simply bewitching?

MILLY. Don't I?—it is the dress, you know. We are such deceptive creatures, are we not? And oh, the boots, the little satin boots! you may take just one peep, if you like. [*Lifts her skirts daintily.*]

GEORGE. Ravishing!

MILLY. Now that you have admired me as becomes a good lover, suppose you tell me how you came here?

GEORGE. Still in my character of good lover. You sent for me.

MILLY. I sent for you!

GEORGE. Yes, and ordered me to wait your good pleasure among the trees at the end of the garden.

MILLY. Why, George, you must be out of your mind! Pray did I make this appointment in writing?

GEORGE. No, a small boy with peculiar notions of his own on the subject of the Queen's English, gave me the message verbally, and told me where I should find the garden key.

MILLY. How much cleverer I am than I thought! I am disclosing quite a talent for intrigue. May I ask whether I kept my own appointment?

GEORGE. Yes.

MILLY. What do you mean?

GEORGE. True, I did not see the face, and therefore cannot swear to the identity. Now that I think of it, the lady walked better than you; it was more of a gliding motion, not so much given to break into little hops and jumps. At any rate you or she, whoever she may be, gave me a letter appointing——

MILLY. Oh, George, George! it is some horrid woman who has fallen in love with you!

GEORGE. Very likely.

MILLY. And who wants to take you away from me. But she shall not! Ugly, wicked creature—I know she is ugly!

GEORGE. I doubt it—a fine figure, at any rate.

MILLY. Show me the woman's letter instantly! I will see it.

GEORGE. Did I teaze my darling? You are a little witch, Milly; before I heard your sweet voice I fancied there was no room in my heart for anything but the deepest sorrow.

MILLY. Has anything happened? Tell me what it is, George. The woman might be as beautiful as—Aunt Eveline, and I should not care now! Only let me share your trouble and so lighten it; it is my right, dear!

GEORGE. My true-hearted darling! Yes, something has happened, something that I scarcely dare

think about. But before I tell you what it is, answer me a few questions. First, has anything particular occurred in the house since I left?

MILLY. No nothing particular, and yet everything seems changed. You know, however, it is but natural that I should feel this.

GEORGE. Flatterer!—how is uncle?

MILLY. Not very well. He rarely alludes to you; but still I think he frets very much over the rupture. He was not like himself that day, was he? Can you imagine what made him so angry? I cannot. He wanted to put off the ball, but as Aunt Eveline said that the invitations could not be recalled, he submitted. He is completely ruled by her, and she is growing much less gentle in her manner to him; the other morning, when she came in flushed from a long walk, and he asked her where she had been, she grew angry—but oh so angry! she quite frightened me. Poor uncle looked at her in silence then put his hand to his head and did not speak for fully half an hour.

GEORGE. Poor dear uncle!—and to you is he still kind?

MILLY. Yes, indeed, especially when Aunt Eveline is not near.

GEORGE. Do not call that woman—Aunt Eveline

MILLY. Why not? It pleases uncle.

GEORGE. Because, my love, it pains me to think that you should ever have been subjected to her influence; that you should ever have felt the contact of her hand.

MILLY. But why?

GEORGE. I would rather not explain why, and yet—you must know, sooner or later. Our uncle's wife is a wicked woman, a notoriously wicked woman. That photograph which I received from Paris was really her portrait—I have the strongest proofs of it. She is the "Stella" of the Châtelet. Beside, it was she who met me in the garden just now, mistaking me, as I first mistook her. How this complication came about, I do not know. This letter is addressed to a lover; in it she refuses indeed to leave her husband, but consents to meet this man, at stated times. The plot is so diabolically arranged that but for the strange mistake of to-night she might have escaped detection for months. What am I to do?—this dreadful discovery——

MILLY. Oh George, Uncle Josiah must not be told. It would kill him; he loves her so!

GEORGE. But Milly, must I who know this thing stand calmly by, and see the honour of the house trampled under that woman's feet?

MILLY. How can I advise? Oh George, I wish there were no such thing as wickedness in the world!

Why can we not shut our eyes and ears—why must we know of it? Oh, my poor dear uncle!

GEORGE. Ah, Milly! you are indeed young to have such knowledge forced upon you. I should not have spoken about it, only it seemed hard to bear the burden of such a secret alone.

MILLY. You were right to tell me. Am I not to help you in bearing all your troubles? But listen. Could you not speak to her, let her know that she is in your power, frighten her into being—good? She looks so gentle, so saint-like, as uncle says, I cannot believe that she is really wicked.

GEORGE. Poor little Milly!

MILLY. Hush! do not refuse to try. Stay here; I will send her to you. Listen! that is her voice. She is coming! Oh, George, do not be hard on her. Remember that, after all, she is our uncle's wife, and he is too old a man to bear the shock of such a discovery.

[*Exit* MILLY, R.]

SCENE V.

Enter EVELINE *from* L.

EVE. [*Advancing hastily toward* GEORGE, *and confronting him some moments in silence.*] I fancied it was your voice I heard, but I could scarcely credit

it. What! you have audacity enough to return to the house from which you were driven—ignominiously driven? I am mistress here, and I order you to go. Do you not understand me? You think, perhaps, that I do not know what brought you here? You are mistaken. If I had entered a moment earlier, I should have seen Milly. Her uncle shall know of it, and you will find that not even your joint ingenuity will enable you to procure a second meeting. Why do you stand there, silent and cold? You shall speak! What brought you here?

GEORGE. [*Rousing himself.*] Yes, I must speak. The time has come.

EVE. What do you mean? [*Frightened.*] I have changed my mind. I will not listen to you. The servants shall rid me of you! [*Turns to ring the bell.* GEORGE takes her extended hand, and forces her to return to the middle of the stage.]

GEORGE. [*Very deliberately.*] Do you remember that game of chess you did me the honour to play with me? Yes, I see you do remember it. At first the advantage was all on your side; but your good fortune made you careless and imprudent, and so I was able, through certain unexpected moves, to embarrass your principal pieces, and finally to say—“Checkmate!” The same thing which happened in

the game has happened in reality. You are completely in my power—at my mercy!

EVE. [*Defiantly.*] You seem to forget how things stand. You are disgraced beyond recall with your uncle. My power over him, on the contrary, is greater than ever. My slightest wish is law.

GEORGE. Yet, I repeat it—you are at my mercy.

EVE. [*Passionately.*] It is false! Do not drive me to extremities, or it may go hard with you.

GEORGE. I am not afraid of you, Mrs. Weightfelt, though your skill in the art of poisoning is not unknown to me. You see, I have had news from Paris since I last had the honour of seeing you. But my knowledge of your antecedents, a knowledge derived from the surest sources, is not my strongest weapon against you. You are too clever a woman not to know when you are beaten. Look at this, and tell me if you recognise it. [*Shows the letter; she utters a faint cry, then springs forward, and endeavours to snatch it. He, with his left hand, holds her back.*]

EVE. This is the vilest treachery! Unless you had murdered him that letter never would have left his possession.

GEORGE. The Duc de Broyes never saw it. I was the man who received it from your hands this evening. [*She clings for support to the back of a chair.*]

Who it was who arranged this singular combination I know no more than you, but everything seems to indicate that I am not your only, or most dangerous enemy.

EVE. [*Drawing herself up to her full height.*] You are right. I am too clever a woman not to know when I am beaten. Furthermore, I accept my defeat. Only remember this—in exposing me to my husband you give him his death blow. Have you thought of that—you who pretend affection for him?

GEORGE. Yes, I have thought of it.

EVE. Oh, there is nothing like the cruelty of virtuous people! I, whom you despise, tempted though I was to throw off the shackles of a life grown irksome to me, hesitated, then refused, for fear of wounding a noble heart. Now, it is with a certain relief that I find the knife has passed into other hands. Do your worst. I am prepared.

GEORGE. Oh! why did you come with your fatal beauty to bring discord and misery in an honest, simple household? You knew—you must have known—that this placid existence had nothing tempting to offer one like you. Why did you leave riches, flattery, pleasure, to come among us?

EVE. Why did I? I will tell you. Because I was not all bad—because there were moments when

I remembered that I had once been an innocent young girl, surrounded by innocent companions—because in the midst of luxury, of adulation, of the envy of others, there came a voice that would not be drowned by the loudest music, that would not yield even to sleep—a voice that kept repeating these words, “And after?” The years passed away, leaving me satiated, and a prey to heart sickness, and every day that ever-recurring question, “And after?” took a deeper meaning. “After,” that is, when my youth and beauty should leave me—when my ill-gotten, insecure wealth should melt away—when I should be left alone with the memory of an evil life—when I should lie on my death-bed. Oh! was it not enough to drive me mad? Often, as the mud from my carriage wheels bespattered a poor woman who stopped to admire me in all my insolent finery—a woman in coarse clothing, holding perhaps a little child by the hand, returning home to prepare dinner for a hard-working husband, a wild impulse would seize me to throw myself at her feet, and exclaim, “Teach me how to be what you are!” Oh, you do not know how often, even in the wildest scenes of my triumph, my thoughts would turn with sickening envy toward the homely joys and sorrows of an obscure wife and mother! You, who have seen only the glitter of our outer life, cannot understand such

things. You think I am talking for effect. You are mistaken. Every word I have uttered is the truth—the simple truth!

GEORGE. Why, then, having won the chance, the rare chance, of living as good women live, did you wilfully throw it away. Why was this letter ever written?

EVE. Because there are two natures in me: the one such as I have described to you, restlessly seeking a purer atmosphere; the other, the inevitable result of the life I have led—depraved, and craving excitement. I think I was going mad with the monotonous respectability of this house, when fate threw that man once more in my way. He loves me, and I was too weary, too reckless to shut my ears. But all is not yet lost. I have been frank with you, I have not attempted to deny anything, or to justify my conduct. Bear with me. Remember how great was the temptation. Give me one more chance! Oh, George! by all that you hold most dear on earth—by the affection which from your boyhood you have felt for your uncle—by your pure love for Milly—give me one more chance! In time I shall learn to curb my nature. I shall become like other women. I will do my best to repair the wrong I have done. Give me another chance! Remember, it will be my last. Have you

then never sinned, that you should harden yourself against me? As you yourself hope for mercy, have mercy on me now! [GEORGE *seems moved*.]

SCENE VI.

Enter BROOKE abruptly from L.

BROOKE. But I will have none! [EVELINE *starts violently, and seems about to faint*.] What, did you fancy that man was more than a mere tool in my hands? It was I who called the duke to your side; it was I who revealed your secret to this young man; it is I, in other words, who hold you in my power. Foolish woman! is your memory so dull that it needs refreshing every few days? I grew tired of the part I have been playing in this house, and so—I have given it up.

EVE. [*Throwing herself at GEORGE's feet*.] Save me from that man! He has been my evil genius from my very childhood. You can save me from him, for he has committed crimes which make him amenable to the laws. I can prove it!

BROOKE. No doubt; but, as probably this highly-respectable family would object to have you tried for a case of poisoning, in the course of which certain

interesting details of life and manners would necessarily come out, I feel tolerably safe.

GEORGE. Scoundrel! leave this place. My uncle——!

BROOKE. Your uncle, young man, has undoubtedly at this moment finished perusing a letter which puts him in possession of the whole case, with ample proofs. I am not a simpleton, I do not do my work by halves.

EVE. George, do not abandon me! for if that man succeeds, the stain of murder will be on my soul before long.

SCENE VII.

Enter Mr. WEIGHTFELT from R. ; he walks with difficulty, and is supported by MILLY.

WEIGHT. [*Stopping in astonishment.*] Eveline—my wife!—in such an attitude? What is the meaning of all this? [*To GEORGE.*] And how came you, sir, to disobey my orders? I thought I forbade you the house?

MILLY. Dear uncle, you are not well; sit down.

WEIGHT. Not yet, my dear, not yet. I must not forget, nor let others forget, that I am master here. Listen all of you. Some villain—it is not worth my while to inquire who—has chosen to accuse my wife,

my beloved wife, of certain crimes. This is how I treat such accusations. [*Tears a paper.*] Eveline come to my side, so. Remember, dear, that I once promised to believe nothing against you, though when I made that promise, I little thought how soon I should be called upon to show that I knew how to keep it.

EVE. My noble husband!

WEIGHT. Child, you know how I love you; you are necessary not only to my happiness but to my very life. I believe in you implicitly, but it is imperative that others should believe in you also, otherwise my strong faith would be called weakness. Then, too, the scene of just now, which I am sure, when explained, will be shown to have some simple and sufficient reason, must not pass unnoticed, since it was witnessed by Milly, and also, which is more singular, by one of the servants. This is an unpleasant ordeal, my love, and one which I would willingly spare you, if I could; but, after all, it is a mere form. It will suffice that you should, before us all, declare yourself innocent. I require no further proof.

BROOKE. [*Aside to her.*] I have but one word to say, and the duke, who, through my care, is waiting outside for you, shall confront you. You can gain nothing by denying what cannot be denied. I shall force George Bradford to show your letter.

WEIGHT. [*Imploringly.*] Eveline, put an end to this miserable suspense! Darling, do not doubt my faith in you, my love for you. It is so easy to say, these accusations are false!

EVE. [*Slowly.*] They are true.

WEIGHT. [*Staggers, but recovers himself.*] I do not believe it! That man, whoever he may really be, has forced you to this. It is not true, Eveline—my wife—it is not true!

EVE. It is true.

WEIGHT. Miserable woman! [*He falls back; GEORGE helps him to a chair; MILLY tends him.*]

EVE. [*Wildly.*] Yes, it is true! At last—at last it is over and I can breathe freely; I can say farewell to all miserable conventionalities. Once more I shall be surrounded with lights, flowers, applause, incense! Once more I shall see crowds in front of me, the whole theatre crowded with people held breathless by the magic of my beauty. Once more I shall be able to drown thought in the intoxication of pleasure. Happiness is a dream—I am awake now, I am awake! [*Turns to go.*]

GEORGE. [*Sternly points to MR. WEIGHTFELT, who sits with a vacant look, changed into a very feeble looking old man.*] Before you go, look at your work.

EVE. [*Looks for a few moments in hard defiance,*

then throws herself sobbing at Mr. WEIGHTFELT'S feet.] My husband! Oh, my husband!

WEIGHT. [*In an altered and peevish tone.*] Take her away, somebody. What do you want, young woman?—I do not know you. Give her what she wants, and let her go; it is so distressing to see a woman cry.

GEORGE. His mind is utterly shattered. Go, you irritate him!

WEIGHT. [*To MILLY.*] Fanny, you tell her to go, that is a good girl. I always liked you better than any of the others, little sister—the youngest and the fairest—eh? tell her to go, do!

GEORGE. He mistakes you for your mother.

EVE. [*Still sobbing, rises to go, then turns round with a wild gesture.*] Lost! lost!

WEIGHT. [*Looking about him uneasily.*] Where is my pipe? Somebody has taken my pipe from me, my favourite Turkish pipe.

MILLY. I will fetch it for you, uncle. We will take care of him, George, dear; it shall be our life's task.

GEORGE. And one worthy of your sweet nature, my darling. Heaven be praised, he has lost all memory of recent events!

FOOTMAN. [*Announcing.*] Sir Thomas and Lady Thayer, and the Misses Thayer!

GEORGE. Good God! the guests, the ball! stop them. Mr. Weightfelt is very ill—a sudden attack. So it is in life, not even our most private sorrows can be sacred from the world!

TABLEAU.

The curtain falls.

“YES—OR NO?”

A Comedietta in one Act.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

LADY TOWNSEND, *a Young Widow.*

NANCY, *her Maid.*

“YES—OR NO?”

SCENE I.

A boudoir richly furnished. LADY TOWNSEND working at a piece of embroidery; a basket of bright-coloured wools by her side. NANCY watering some plants in a jardinière by the window.

LADY TOWNSEND. [*After a pause, during which she pulls out her needle and knots her worsted, with evident impatience.*] Nancy, what o'clock is it?

NANCY. Half-past four, my lady.

LADY T. Only half-past four!—you said it was twenty minutes past when I last asked, and that seems an age ago; dear, how slowly the time goes! But I am sure that clock is wrong; when was it regulated?

NANCY. Last Monday, my lady, and the man said that it had not varied two minutes in the month.

LADY T. He did not know what he was talking

about! O dear, O dear! what stupid work this is. Nancy, if Miss Sharp should call, mind you admit her. I am in the very mood to listen to her dissertations on the degradation of our sex! I declare I do not wonder there are so many stupid men in the world; henceforth, when I look at their heavy-eyed, idiot faces, I shall say to myself: "Their mothers, I am sure, worked innumerable sofa cushions of uncomfortable magnificence—no wonder the sons are fools!" There now, my worsted is in a snarl—oh, how stupid! [*Breaks off the worsted, then throws her work away and upsets the basket of wools.*] Now I feel better!

NANCY. Shall I pick them up, my lady?

LADY T. No, they never looked so nice before—I feel quite kittenish when I look at the pretty soft balls rolling in every direction. Have you not done watering those absurd plants? they are drooping, of course they are; plants cannot live in a room like this! Come here, I think you began a novel to me last night, only I fell asleep just as the hero was threatening to blow his brains out; suppose we see whether his resolution held good?

NANCY. [*Sits down and takes up a book.*] Shall I tell John not to admit visitors—except, indeed, Miss Sharp? It is getting near the time for afternoon tea.

LADY T. Yes—no, that is, it does not matter, it is such a dreadful afternoon, no one who did not wish to look like a drowned rat would come out, especially Mr.—especially those who are accustomed to ride. Go on, child, I am all interest.

NANCY. This, if you remember, my lady, is the letter John wrote to Jane, with the pistol lying on the desk by him. "By the time you receive this, I shall be a corpse. I loved you. You knew it—you trifled with me! I die."

LADY T. Dear me, what a tragic young man! and so curt too; his short sentences are quite like the snap of a dog. Ever since Trollope, novelists think it is necessary to write in short barks; I suppose it would be difficult to find one sentence of eight words in that whole thick volume. Suppose we leave the spasmodic young gentleman to put an end to himself comfortably. Tell me, Nancy, did you never feel as though you wanted to tear your duster into small strips, and knock your looking-glass into atoms?

NANCY. Sometimes, my lady.

LADY T. When, for example?

NANCY. Last Sunday.

LADY T. Sunday? Not a proper day to indulge in such peculiarities. I always choose a week-day. What put you in so unchristian a frame of mind?

NANCY. Well, my lady, you know it was my out day.

LADY T. Yes, I remember. Well?

NANCY. And seeing that exercise is good for the health, I had arranged to take a long walk, and seeing also that a young woman ought to be protected on such occasions, Jamie was to have met me.

LADY T. Jamie?—ah! Jamie. Nice name that.

NANCY. Yes, my lady, very nice; he is my young man.

LADY T. Suppose I were to tell you that I allowed no followers?

NANCY. Ah, my lady! not even on out days?

LADY T. Well, I am rather soft hearted, I know, so we will not investigate the matter too closely; I hope you enjoyed the walk.

NANCY. Ah! that is the trouble—Jamie never came.

LADY T. Indeed! So it was for that reason that you felt inclined to smash your looking-glass?

NANCY. Yes, my lady.

LADY T. What did you do when the truant came back?

NANCY. I—I forgave him.

LADY T. Indeed! that was very foolish.

NANCY. But he had a good reason——

LADY T. In love, there is no such thing as reason. A lover should be able to compass the impossible.

NANCY. Yes, my lady, I will remember that. Please, I have a great favour to ask.

LADY T. Really? I suppose you want another holiday in order to take another walk under Mr. Jamie's protection.

NANCY. Not exactly that, my lady. But, oh! Jamie is such a good gardener.

LADY T. I am glad to hear it.

NANCY. And Parks told me himself he meant to leave Shadywood and set up for himself.

LADY T. That is news. Parks should have confided his plans to me, if he had thoughts of leaving my service.

NANCY. And please, my lady, Jamie would fill the place so well. He is wonderful for making roses grow, whether they will or not.

LADY T. Nancy, this is a serious affair. I see that you have your eye on that doll's-place of a gardener's house. But, child, you have been with me ever since you were fifteen, and I feel more interest in you than I would in an ordinary maid.

NANCY. Thank you, my lady.

LADY T. And therefore I have no idea of hasten-

ing that calamity, which polite people call the happy state of matrimony.

NANCY. Oh!

LADY T. A young girl is much better without a husband, or at least with a husband three times her own age, like my poor Sir Richard. That was a wise marriage.

NANCY. Yes, my lady; but it was scarcely your choice, I have heard.

LADY T. You are mistaken. At seventeen I was the most unblushing little worldling possible, and Sir Richard gave me what I wanted—wealth and a title. As to heart and affection, that is all nonsense—fit only for novels. And—Nancy, you would be very miserable in that gardener's lodge; I am convinced of it.

NANCY. I would be willing to risk it.

LADY T. We will say no more on the subject. It seems to me I heard the door-bell ring.

NANCY. Perhaps it is Mr. Cavendish.

LADY T. He must not come in—no, not on any account!

NANCY. I will go and see to it, my lady.

LADY T. [*Calling her back.*] Nancy, is my hair all right?

NANCY. Yes, my lady, quite; but unless I go at once——

LADY T. I am convinced this ribbon is unbecoming. Why did I not put on the pink? Are you sure I look my best?

NANCY. Quite sure. There—I hear the front door opening. [*Peeps.*] Oh, it is only a tall footman, with a square note that looks like an invitation.

LADY T. [*Provoked.*] How stupid! I refuse beforehand. I dislike tea-parties, and hate balls. Last evening, for example, I was dreadfully bored. Fancy a crush where one always ran against people one did not care to see, and never met those one did want to see. At last when I struggled to a chair, from which I could see the door, one impertinent wretch said: "Shall I find it for you?" "Find what?" I naturally asked. "Oh, beg pardon; I thought you had lost something, or somebody"—all because I happened to glance up at each new arrival. Then another impertinent wretch brought me an ice in the shape of a heart, saying, "I think it is something like this that Lady Townsend has lost." And all the wretches smiled in concert.

NANCY. And he never came?

LADY T. [*Sighing.*] No, he never came.

NANCY. Perhaps there was some reason?

LADY T. I do not care; I will not forgive him.

NANCY. What a pleasant-spoken gentleman he is!

LADY T. [*Sighing.*] O yes.

NANCY. And very much run after too.

LADY T. My dear, half the girls in our set are dying for him.

NANCY. As to that, it will not help them much.

LADY T. Who knows? That Sarah Creighton is such a forward creature.

NANCY. You knew Mr. Cavendish years ago, did you not, my lady?

LADY T. Yes. When we were children we were always together. That is the reason that he sometimes calls me by my Christian name. He says Mary is the sweetest name in the world; but on one occasion he actually changed it to Molly. I was so angry! I felt quite like a dairy-maid at once. Molly indeed! Why not Polly at once?

NANCY. After all, my lady, for polished manners, Sir John Raymond is superior to him.

LADY T. [*Quickly.*] Sir John indeed! He has the polish of a block at a barber's shop. No one ever saw his whiskers out of curl; he never tossed his black hair carelessly so. He never utters anything but the most absurd commonplaces. Ah, how well Mr. Cavendish talks!

NANCY. Yes; but to break an appointment.

LADY T. He—may be ill. There, I have worried myself into the blues. Ah, Nancy, women have the hardest part of life assigned to them—passive endur-

ance. What a relief it would be now to rush away to some bank, or mess-room full of rival officers, or some studio, where canvas had to be daubed, or marble chipped, and bully somebody, There, child, pick up all that rubbish, and leave me alone. I mean to write an article on human depravity, and send it to the 'Pall Mall.' Whenever people are out of sorts nowadays, they always rush into print; if not in a novel, at least in a letter to the 'Times.'

NANCY. [*Picking up the worsteds.*] No one is to be admitted this afternoon, did you say, my lady?

LADY T. I did not say anything about it. You can look out of one of the front windows, and tell me who comes; then I will decide.

NANCY. Very well, my lady.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE II.

LADY TOWNSEND *alone.*

LADY T. [*Walking uneasily up and down.*] They say that a day is only composed of twelve hours. I know better. I have endured at least twenty-four since I woke this morning. I am sure that clock is slow! I shall never be able to endure the thing after to-day; its great, white china face stares me out

of countenance; and, at any rate, gilt clocks are aggravating to the nerves. I will certainly drive round to Brown's to-morrow, and see if he will change it for me. I remember looking at a thing, shaped something like a coffin, and made of black marble, with a sprightly figure of death striking the hours with his scythe. I think that would exactly suit me. [*Sits down; and, opening a small desk, takes from it a photograph.*] No, you are not handsome—not a bit handsome! Your mouth is too large, sir, and your chin too square. You look like a determined sort of fellow, one who would stand any amount of hard knocks in the fight with this wicked world without flinching; and yet who could be wheedled out of almost anything by a bright smile or a pleading word. My great, strong, tender lover, do you know I should like to have you at my side, tease you with an appearance of anger, just for the pleasure of forgiving you? I wonder if you would ask pardon with due humility? You know you have offended me dreadfully. You promised to meet me at that dismal ball, and you broke your promise. Such a miserable evening as I passed, waiting, waiting;—dear! how cross I was, and how cruelly I did snub that poor Sir John! I hate that Sir John. I know very well that all he wants is my fortune. Heigh-ho! a widow, young, rich and—

and not too bad-looking, has many trials. Perhaps it would be better not to remain a widow much longer. What do you say to that, sir? [*Looks at photograph.*] He smiled; I am sure he smiled [*Reflectively.*] I knew that a little serious, sober thought would chase the blues away, and it is an undoubted fact that to engage in literary pursuits one must cultivate a calm and serene state of mind. I feel quite prepared now to begin my article on ‘Depravity;’ but I must draw my inspiration from this striking example of my theme. [*Kisses the photograph.*] I know what he would say if he had seen me do that. He would say that he was jealous of his own image. He is not as respectful as he ought to be. I shall scold him very seriously when he comes. “Molly” is certainly not a reverential style of addressing me! It is not as though I were still a madcap of a girl running wild in the country—I am Lady Townsend, a person of great experience, and of vast importance in the world of fashion; but he cares so little about the world of fashion! He laughs at it, and at me for obeying its rules. Decidedly he has many faults, and I fear his wife will not be able to have everything her own way, unless, indeed, she condescends to coax. I like to coax well enough—at times, but there are moments when I wish to be imperious, to act like a despotic little

queen. Ah, one never knows when one is really well off! It would be much wiser in me to remain Lady Townsend, after all. [*Sighs.*] Well, now for my article. [*Writes.*]

SCENE III.

Enter NANCY, *carrying a bouquet of choice flowers.*

NANCY. Oh, my lady—my lady!

LADY T. [*Still writing.*] Well, what is it? Has Miss Sharp called?

NANCY. No; but these flowers!

LADY T. [*Looking up.*] How sweet! Who sent them?

NANCY. Mr. Cavendish's man just handed them to me.

LADY T. [*Taking the flowers.*] So this is his way of asking pardon, is it? How lovely they are! Flowers in January are like the rare smile of a stern man—far more precious than any ordinary person's good nature. Lilies of the valley too! How did he guess that they were my prime favourites? I remember telling him so when we were children; but that is so long ago it would be but natural if he had quite forgotten it. And yet, Nancy, he has the

most marvellous memory. The other day we were talking of birds, when suddenly he said: "Do you remember our bird-nesting expedition that spring I spent at my uncle's? We two stole out quite alone, and had great sport, only in climbing a tree—for, Lady Townsend, you did climb trees in those days—you tore your frock; it was a little white frock with lilac spots. I remember it quite distinctly; and you cried, not out of repentance for your mad-cap frolic, but because you knew you would be kept at home the next day and forced to mend the rent. Such a rent as it was too!" Yes, he actually remembered all those trifling details. How sweet these flowers are!

NANCY. My lady, I beg pardon! but is there not the corner of a note peeping out from behind that moss-rose bud?

LADY T. Nancy, you should have let me find it out for myself. Really I am inclined to think that you have greater experience in such things than is exactly suitable at your age. I do not approve of clandestine looking notes. I rather think I shall not open this one.

NANCY. Oh, but, my lady, it does look so tempting!

LADY T. If there is one thing of which I disapprove, it is curiosity; it is a feeling quite incompatible with true dignity of character.

NANCY. [*Crestfallen.*] Yes, my lady.

LADY T. And it is a fault of which I advise you to correct yourself at once. [*A pause, during which both look attentively at the note.*] I suppose it is a very little note, since it is so nearly hidden by a rose-leaf. To look at the exterior would not be reading it. [*Draws it out, and looks at it on all sides.*]

NANCY. It is a very little one, certainly; it cannot contain much; perhaps not more than three words.

LADY T. You think not? I would venture to affirm, on the contrary, that there were six or eight, if not more.

NANCY. I once got a love letter from Jamie, and the "My dear Nancy" took up a space as big as that note altogether.

LADY T. [*Meditatively.*] On second thoughts there may be something of real importance in it. It really 'is not quite fair to Mr. Cavendish, not to read his letters. Decidedly, I think it is my duty to open it.

NANCY. I am sure it is, my lady.

LADY T. [*Hesitatingly.*] Yet he might have sent it openly, instead of burying it in flowers.

NANCY. It is such a mite of a note, that it would have been lost, I am sure, if it had been sent in an ordinary fashion.

LADY T. There may be some truth in that. I

cannot hesitate any longer about so evident a duty. Justice before everything. [*Opens the note and reads.*] "I shall be with you at a little past five, to obtain my pardon, and a cup of tea, at the same time. A. C." Oh, Nancy, Nancy! what o'clock is it? [*Looks at her watch.*] How stupid of my watch to have stopped this day of all others! I have no faith in that clock.

NANCY. It is just five, my lady.

LADY T. Just five—dear, dear! and is it still raining very hard?

NANCY. No, the rain has stopped.

LADY T. Come here, child; I feel sure my hair is falling down on one side.

NANCY. No, my lady, it is quite in order.

LADY T. I am sorry I did not put on my silver ornaments, they are so light and pretty.

NANCY. Shall I fetch them?

LADY T. Yes—no! Now I remember, Mr. Cavendish praised this set the other day, and his taste is perfect. I might have known that the weather was mending, even if you had not told me, Nancy; my spirits have risen so remarkably. I am very susceptible to atmospheric influences—a perfect thermometer in fact!

NANCY. [*Drily.*] Yes, my lady, I have always noticed it.

LADY T. It is the same with all persons of a nervous temperament.

NANCY. [*A knock at the door is heard, NANCY opens it and receives a card.*] Miss Sharp wishes to know if Lady Townsend will receive her in order to discuss various points of deep social importance; she has sent in this card with the message.

LADY T. The dreadful woman! Do not let her in on any account!—why, it is past five already.

NANCY. But your ladyship gave orders——

LADY T. That was ages ago. Quick! tell John to say that—that a sudden attack of—of anything he pleases, will prevent me from receiving Miss Sharp this afternoon! [*NANCY speaks to some one at the door, then returns.*] Points of social importance indeed! There is but one point of social life which has any importance in my mind just now. Nancy, these women who set up as preachers and reformers of their frivolous sex are dreadful creatures. They think that by much loud talking and laying down of impossible maxims, they will change what hundreds of generations have either approved of, or acquiesced in; I myself believe in a certain degree of reform, but not in a total upsetting of the very barriers of civilization. Why, my dear, those women do not want any of us to marry!

NANCY. How dreadful !

LADY T. The truth is, you know that misery loves company. I will venture to assert that Miss Sharp never received just such a bouquet as this, containing such a jewel of a note !

NANCY. I am sure she never did ! I am glad I am not strong minded.

LADY T. [*Reading over the note.*] “To obtain my pardon and a cup of tea at the same time”—that does not sound exactly—what shall I say ?—exactly penetrated with remorse, does it ?

NANCY. Not particularly.

LADY T. And yet he ought to feel remorse, real remorse. “To obtain my pardon!”—to obtain it, mind you!—not to pray for it—not to tremble lest it should be withheld—but to obtain it. It sounds almost as though he said, “What I wish for, I can obtain, almost without asking for it. I shall take my pardon like my cup of tea—because I want it, and it is sure to be given to me !” Really, Mr. Caven-
dish, this is a little too much !

NANCY. But how does your ladyship know that these thoughts passed through his mind ?

LADY T. How do I know ? Easily enough. I have had considerable experience of the world, considering my age, and this experience teaches me that there is one thing that has never been, and never will be,

equalled, and that is—masculine vanity. People talk of the vanity of us women, what does it amount to, after all?—almost nothing. We like to look our best, why?—because it pleases our lords and masters that we should be pretty; we hide our little impatiences, our little ill-humours, and carry a smile about on our faces, why?—again, because our lords and masters like to bask in sunshine, and have a most cowardly fear of feminine clouds and thunderstorms. Consequently, our little innocent vanities are simply food for that great and all-devouring monster—masculine vanity. A man, my dear, if he happens to be passably good-looking or possessed of the slightest fascination of manner, struts about the world, looking down on all creatures with an air, which says: “I am lord of all I survey!” Oh, I have no patience with it all! [*Throws down the bouquet on the table.*]

NANCY. What it is to be a lady, and clever! When my Jamie came back to me and said, “Now, no nonsense, Nan!—you know, lass, that I would rather have been with you than anywhere else,” why I, like a little goose, was quite satisfied, and never stopped to reason myself into unhappiness about it. My lady, I am sure you are quite right, and one is much better off unmarried, than tied down for life to such a vain, unreasonable creature as a man. I—I

shall send Jamie about his business next time!
[*Wipes her eyes.*]

LADY T. How do I know but that he has made a jest of the whole matter to half a dozen of his bachelor friends? Now that I think of it, how should those men last evening have guessed why I was restless, and for whom I was watching?—why it is all quite clear! Mr. Cavendish had taken them into his confidence; Mr. Cavendish, the chivalrous gentleman, had said to each, "My dear Jack, or Tom, or Ned, I'm in for the little widow,"—yes, Nancy, that is the way they talk, I know; my brother told me so—"I'm in for the little widow, and see if I don't win the race! Pretty good prize, eh?—young, no encumbrances, and a good round fortune!" Oh, the wretches! I hate them all! [*Bursts into tears.*]

NANCY. Ah, it is not only Sir John who is in want of money, perhaps——

LADY T. Sir John again! I believe, girl, that Sir John has bribed you to speak of him. There, there, do not look so miserable about it; I know you are fond of me in your way. Mr. Cavendish never bribed you, I am sure.

NANCY. Oh, no, my lady, indeed he never did!

LADY T. [*Throwing herself in an arm-chair.*] What o'clock is it now, Nancy?

NANCY. Ten minutes past five.

LADY T. Ten minutes past five! That is the way he keeps his own appointments. Lovers in old days used always to be before the time, now they are invariably late. He said past five, and of course I concluded, "past five" meant two, three, perhaps even five minutes past. But ten! Oh, it is too bad to play on my feelings so! Nancy, just look out of that window, and see if he is coming. I thought I heard the distant tramp of a horse's hoofs.

NANCY. No, my lady, I see nothing of him, and it has begun to rain again!

LADY T. [*Wiping her eyes.*] Ah! I was sure of it; I am so excruciatingly subject to atmospheric variations.

NANCY. Shall I read a little more of that novel?

LADY T. That novel, indeed! as though the account of a suicide would be likely to raise my spirits! Not but what I am sure the disconsolate lover changes his mind after loading the pistol. No one ever dies for love in these degenerate days!

NANCY. Shall I put your ladyship's embroidery in order?

LADY T. I have told you that I hated it! A tapestry frame makes me think of that dreadful old Penelope; and Penelope makes me think of lonely women waiting for wandering men who never come back. I am sure I never should have waited

so long for Ulysses; he was not worth so much patience; beside, patient women are nearly always fools.

NANCY. I never heard of the lady before, was she an English woman?

LADY T. Certainly not a modern one, or she would have done what I am going to do. Order in the tea, and forbid the door to everybody. Do you not understand, Nancy? I want my tea.

NANCY. Yes, my lady. [*Turns to go.*]

LADY T. [*Calling her back.*] And, Nancy, I have determined not to give Jamie the gardener's place, because I do not wish to subject you, yet a while, at least, to the evils of matrimony. Do not look so unhappy, child; I do it for your own good, you know that, do you not?

NANCY. [*In a depressed tone of voice.*] Oh yes, my lady.

LADY T. Wait a moment. I am sure I hear a horse. [*Rushes to the window.*] Oh yes, yes, it is he! Of course, a little past five meant a quarter past, I might have known it!

NANCY. You said I was to forbid the door to everybody.

LADY D. So I did. It would serve him right, would it not? My head says yes, but oh, my heart says—no! It was a pretty way of asking pardon, after all, to send those lovely flowers; and oh, how

roughly I threw them down. Here is a rose-bud quite crushed—it is the same that hid that naughty little note. I never could endure a man who was too humble!

NANCY. I should think not indeed!

LADY T. It was foolish in me to expect Mr. Cavendish to act as a Sir John Raymond would have acted. I despise Sir John; he is not half a man.

NANCY. My lady, what order shall I give at the door?

LADY T. I have not quite decided yet. I suppose Mr. Cavendish must have turned the corner by this time.

NANCY. I am sure he has.

LADY T. Flowers, pretty flowers, what shall I do? Yes, that is it, they shall decide for me.

NANCY. How?

LADY T. See. I take this sprig of lilies of the valley. I do not even glance to see how many tiny fairy bells it has. I would scorn to cheat. At each that I pluck off I will say yes—then no, and so on, and if the last says yes, why he shall come in; if it says no—why then I suppose he must go away.

NANCY. What a nice idea!

LADY T. [*Pulls the blossoms off the stalk.*] Yes—no—yes—oh, Nancy, I feel quite as though I were

having my fortune told!—no—yes—how I like that little word yes! No—yes—no—why that is all; there are no more. It—it stopped at no!

NANCY. So it did my lady.

LADY T. Oh dear, what shall I do? I was sure it would stop at yes. When Gretchen pulled her flower to pieces, it stopped at yes—but things in real life never do come out as they should.

NANCY. I never half believed in flower talk, myself.

LADY T. Did you not?—you are a sensible girl, Nancy. After all, lilies of the valley are stupid little flowers. [*Throws the stalk away.*] There! I will choose another favourite at once. Lilies of the valley are fit for school girls, for misses just entering their teens. I quite despise them. I know what I will do, Nancy, just to spite the silly flower, I will say—yes.

NANCY. It is just in time, my lady, for I hear the bell ringing.

LADY T. And, Nancy, I should be sorry to make you unhappy, my girl. I will see what can be done about the gardener's place!

NANCY. Oh, thank you,—thank you, my lady!

LADY T. Are you sure my eyes are not red—crying is so stupid. I wonder why I cried just now? Do I really look my best?

The curtain drops.

A FLIRTATION.

A Comedy in one Act.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.



LAURA MARSHALL.

CARRIE BURTON.

MAURICE HEREFORD.

JAMES STAUNTON.

A FLIRTATION.

SCENE I.

A conservatory, tastefully arranged and well lighted ; the music from a ball-room is faintly heard. JAMES STAUNTON and CARRIE BURTON are eagerly talking to LAURA MARSHALL, who has thrown herself on a sofa, a little in the background. All are in evening dress.

CARRIE. But, my dear Laura, I assure you——

JAMES. When I tell you, Miss Marshall, that I was myself present.

LAURA. Do you not then think, Mr. Staunton, that since I am your future wife's best friend, it was your duty to stop this—wager?

JAMES. As to that, my dear young lady, even if I had had the desire to do so, I should not have had the power. I came in at the end of the discussion. Beside, I own I did not look at it in the same light as you seem to.

LAURA. [*Indignantly rising.*] And pray, in what

light could you regard it? Society among us seems to have arrived at a pretty pass, since gentlemen—I use the word advisedly, for you all, I believe, lay claim to the distinction—gentlemen, can coolly discuss the possibility of my conquest within a specified time; can even bet on it, as they would bet at a public racecourse, some taking odds with, most, however, against me. I am, indeed, honoured by the high opinion in which I am held. And to say that we regard ourselves as belonging to the “upper ten!” One would fancy that such things might perhaps happen among barmaids and ploughboys, but could scarcely, it seems to me, be credited among refined ladies and gentlemen. Oh! I could cry with shame, but that my anger is too fierce for tears!

JAMES. Egad! since you look at it from that point of view, I have nothing more to say. [*Sits down at one side.*]

CARRIE. Now, Laura, do not be absurd, there’s a dear! If I were in your place, I would be only too glad to have such an opportunity of punishing that Mr. Hereford for his presumption. After all, you know, it is only to be a flirtation, and you, with your fascinations, can easily catch him in his own net. Do please, if you love me, make him desperately miserable.

LAURA. A man who can deliberately make a

wager on such a subject is not capable of being made miserable.

CARRIE. But James says that he was surprised into it; it was the other men who started the subject. Some maintained that you, the reigning belle of the season, were inaccessible, and others that Maurice Hereford was irresistible.

LAURA. And so it was agreed that if Mr. Hereford could not extract from me, before midnight, a confession of tender feeling—of love in fact, he should be declared loser. Really this young man is insufferable with his overweening conceit! Why, we scarcely have more than a bowing acquaintance, yet, before midnight, in the midst of the bustle and noise of this ball, I am to whisper that my heart has found its master! And on what does he base his pretensions? There will be at least ten men here this evening handsomer than he; and as to that fascination of manner which schoolgirls rave about, I deny it entirely.

CARRIE. At any rate, fascinating or not, he will find more than his match in you.

LAURA. [*Excitedly.*] I will not speak to him; I will leave mother to entertain the guests, and, pleading a headache, retire to my room.

CARRIE. Then they will say you feared the test!

LAURA. I fear! I indeed! No, Maurice Hereford,

I will meet you on your own ground, and before the clock strikes twelve you shall be at my feet, my bounden slave.

JAMES. [*Quietly.*] I knew that I had only to keep out of the discussion to have you women arrive at the very point at which I wished you to arrive.

CARRIE. James, if you dare to indulge in your usual pointless sarcasms, I will not dance with you at all this evening!

JAMES. Then you will be faithless to your duties as "engaged young lady," and I shall have to console myself as well as possible with champagne and a quiet cigar in some deliciously-deserted corner. Perhaps I might even induce that stunning little Miss Convers to share my nook. By Jove, what eyes that girl has!

CARRIE. She squints, you know she does!

LAURA. You will have the pleasure of witnessing the opening of the campaign. Mr. Hereford is coming this way. [*Turns aside and picks a flower with a pretence of indifference.*]

JAMES. I have heard that love guesses the approach of the beloved one by the operation of those very obscure properties poets call natural affinities, electric sympathies, or any other fine name that happens to suit. I now see that instinctive hate has the same power.

SCENE II.

Enter MAURICE HEREFORD.

MAURICE. [*Bowing to the ladies.*] Some happy inspiration led me this way; ladies, I am your most humble servant. Ah, Staunton, how are you?

JAMES. As well as a man in my circumstances is expected to be.

MAURICE. In that case, we poor ordinary mortals can but look on in admiring envy. Miss Burton, I have just left poor Wilson tearing out his hair, vowing that nowadays you were all but invisible; I heard him declare that if you refused to waltz with him he would play wallflower all the evening, and shoot Staunton to-morrow.

CARRIE. Out of regard for Mr. Staunton's safety, I shall be forced to give him two waltzes instead of one. He is such a delicious partner.

JAMES. Really, your concern for my safety is very touching, my dear Carrie; I cannot consent to such a sacrifice. [*They converse in dumb show.*]

MAURICE. [*Turning to LAURA, and addressing her with the greatest deference of manner.*] I am the bearer of a message to you, Miss Marshall. Your mother commissioned me to say that your guests

were arriving so fast that she was in need of your assistance. Will you permit me to escort you to the ball-room?

LAURA. Certainly; though to own the truth, I never felt less inclined to play the polite hostess; I am in the worst of humours!

MAURICE. Would it be indiscreet to ask the cause of this most unusual state of mind?

LAURA. Oh, dear no! I am quite willing to tell you. My milliner sent home the most unbecoming bonnet this afternoon! I look thirty in it at the very least.

MAURICE. What a catastrophe!

LAURA. Is it not? and people pretend that our cares are light.

MAURICE. How little they understand! I at least sympathise with you.

LAURA. I am sure you do; I feel that we are kindred spirits, for to have an ill-fitting coat, or a badly tied cravat, would, I am sure, quite upset the equilibrium of your mind.

MAURICE. How perfectly you have read me, Miss Marshall. It would be absurd to attempt to hide any thought from you, you would discover it with one flash of your eyes. Therefore I shall wear my heart on my sleeve for your benefit.

LAURA. Pray do not. Give me at least a chance

of using that wonderful penetration with which you so flatteringly believe me to be gifted. But mother will wonder what has become of me; I have been in here fully half an hour. I had just been confiding my vexation to Carrie when you came in. [*Turns to go.*]

MAURICE. One moment I pray. I came early hoping to obtain more than one dance. At Mrs. Perry's the other evening, I could not even approach you, you were so surrounded. [*Takes her tablets.*]

LAURA. I promised the first and third dances to Colonel Fairfield, when he called last evening.

MAURICE. As it happens, Colonel Fairfield came to see me this afternoon and said he was called away suddenly on urgent family business; he sent you his best compliments and me—as a substitute. May I hope that you will consider me Colonel Fairfield during those two dances?

LAURA. Since the Colonel chose you as his substitute, I have no right to object.

MAURICE. Thank you so much. But I desire to return now to my original character; Colonel Fairfield is disposed of, but Maurice Hereford humbly begs on his part, for—the second and fourth dances.

LAURA. [*Suppressing a smile.*] Really, Mr. Hereford, your very humble prayer sounds considerably like any other man's assurance.

MAURICE. Perhaps you think that I wish to tire you out with too much dancing; but you are quite in error. I think it is the greatest possible mistake to make a toil of pleasure; a waltz is very delightful certainly, but a quiet rest and talk after the waltz seems to me of far greater importance. What is more delicious than to lean back in a luxurious chair, half conscious of a delightful fatigue, yet almost forgetting it in the charm of a pleasant conversation? One's ideas flow with great ease, words come of themselves under the influence of the distant rumour of music and voices—do you not think so?

LAURA. Perhaps.

MAURICE. Then you will not refuse my prayer?

LAURA. I think I ought to do so. Four dances in succession!

MAURICE. Pardon me; Colonel Fairfield dances two of them with you—by proxy, it is true, but then remember how often in olden times marriages even were celebrated by proxy—legally celebrated; what objection then can there be to dancing—by proxy?

LAURA. [*Laughing.*] Really, Mr. Hereford, you are an excellent sophist.

MAURICE. You flatter me.

LAURA. But what will people say? Four dances will carry us quite up to—midnight.

MAURICE. I should scarcely think so.

LAURA. Decidedly I can give you but one dance now, and one—after twelve o'clock.

MAURICE. Ah, then I shall not be able to impart the good news I bring you.

LAURA. Good news?

MAURICE. Yes, excellent news that would delight you—that would make you forget the sin of your milliner.

LAURA. [*Irresolutely.*] Indeed?

MAURICE. Tidings of such a character, that they could not be imparted in a moment. You would sadly regret being interrupted by a meaningless fellow with an eyeglass or a lisp, to whom you had promised your second dance.

LAURA. What sort of tidings?

MAURICE. It would be too tantalising to let you have an inkling of them without being able to give them to you in their entire unity of delight.

LAURA. Could no one but you give me this news?

MAURICE. No one.

LAURA. You are taking an unmanly advantage of my feminine curiosity.

MAURICE. Not at all. Listen, I will be generous. My tidings concern a certain youth now far from this land, in whom you deign to interest yourself.

LAURA. Not—not Ned Blake—not my curly-headed boy lover?

MAURICE. The very same.

LAURA. What about him? it is so long since we have heard anything.

MAURICE. May I write my name on your tablets?

LAURA. Not yet.

MAURICE. I am so sorry; I have so many details to impart; time will be wanting.

LAURA. Well—you may.

MAURICE. A thousand thanks. First Colonel Fairfield, then your humble servant—then——

LAURA. Must you have them all?

MAURICE. Every one.

LAURA. What a tyrant! I had quite forgotten poor mother's message, let us go quickly.

[*Exeunt, MAURICE and LAURA from L.*]

SCENE III.

JAMES STAUNTON *and* CARRIE BURTON, *who during the last few minutes have been listening.*

JAMES. A—hum! well, Carrie, what do you say to this opening of the campaign?

CARRIE. I say that Mr. Hereford is the most respectfully impertinent man I ever saw!

JAMES. By Jove! that last was a master-stroke.

Where did he fish up that story of the absent boy lover? is there any truth in it?

CARRIE. Of course there is. Did you never hear of Ned Blake? Why it is quite a romance in the style of young Byron and Mary Chatworth. Ned is a clever, precocious, dreaming boy, who took it into his head before he was sixteen to fall desperately in love with Laura.

JAMES. Nonsense.

CARRIE. It was pretty serious nonsense then; his parents pooh-poohed the matter, in their worldly wisdom, but Laura never laughed at him. I think if she had he would have killed himself.

JAMES. A good thrashing at school would have taken all that stuff out of him.

CARRIE. That is the way you men, who pride yourselves on your common sense, judge, is it? James Staunton, I am ashamed of you!

JAMES. But now, Carrie, reason a little about it; Miss Marshall, who must be some four or five years older than this boy, could not possibly marry him, could she?

CARRIE. Certainly not.

JAMES. Well then?

CARRIE. Well then—instead of turning this child's sentiment into ridicule, she did the only thing which was likely to cure him. She applied to her uncle,

Commodore Duncan, who was just starting on a two years' cruise, and the commodore, who is very fond of her, consented, after much grumbling, to take the boy with him. But it nearly broke Ned's heart, and he has not written a line to her since his departure. I presume Mr. Hereford, who, you know, is a great traveller, met him somewhere, and is perhaps charged with some message.

JAMES. At any rate, he has chosen a most propitious moment for delivering it. My opinion is that he is drawing on his imagination for his share of the story.

CARRIE. I should not wonder! I have the greatest contempt for that man.

JAMES. Contempt! why?

CARRIE. Why? The question comes with much grace, from you. Why, indeed? Because when a man will play upon the better and more poetical feelings of a girl's nature, simply for the attainment of a mean and selfish end, he is worthy of all contempt.

JAMES. All things are fair in love and in war, and as in this case, there seems to be a mixture of both these pleasant things, the means he adopts are doubly justified.

CARRIE. I have no patience with you! A man will defend another man, even when he knows that the thing in which he defends him is dishonourable!

JAMES. While a woman on the contrary will turn against her dearest female friend at the first word of doubt which our not too charitable world raises against her.

CARRIE. You are insupportable! I for my part am sure Laura will give this conceited fellow a lesson which he will not easily forget.

JAMES. And I for my part feel sure that she is more than half in love with him already.

CARRIE. Now, that is too much! So it seems that one of your lordly sex has but to turn his eyes toward one of us, to behold her at his feet?

JAMES. It would seem so. But ye powers defend me! I see such a storm gathering in your eyes, my gentle Carrie, that in self-defence, I must prepare myself for the onslaught. [*Sits himself comfortably and prepares a cigarette.*]

CARRIE. [*Angrily.*] Oh, I wish that all the girls who think that to be "engaged" is the summit of earthly bliss, could see you at this moment! This is the realization of our dreams of lover-like ardour! It is to be rewarded with this amount of chivalrous devotion that we lavishly bestow, that we squander, all there is of tenderness, of love in our natures! Knights of old deemed it their greatest pride to wear their ladies' colours about them in war or tournament, and as reward of their valour, thought

themselves blessed indeed even if allowed to kiss the maiden's white hand while kneeling at her feet. Behold the modern lover! leaning back in a chair, his feet gracefully reposing on the rungs of another, his hands in his pockets, his nose in the air, and a cigar between his lips!

JAMES. I say, Carrie, you are rather hard on a fellow.

CARRIE. And yet, I suppose, men nowadays have, hidden somewhere about them, a thing they call their heart. At times, very rarely, it is true, one catches a fleeting glimpse of it. A chance word, a quickly repressed look, tells us that they can love, only they are ashamed of the weakness, and hide it so carefully that at last we are bound to think that if it ever did exist, it died almost at its birth.

JAMES. One must march with one's day.

CARRIE. And so will I march with the spirit of the day, inasmuch as I mean to break my engagement. You see, sir, that is a rule which can work both ways, and the breaking of engagements is decidedly fashionable just now.

JAMES. And pray on what grounds will you dismiss your humble servant?

CARRIE. On the ground, Mr. Staunton, that I am tired of your coldness; that I see stretching before

me such a vista of negligences, of slights, of indifference, that I turn aside while it is yet time. On the ground that it is hard to find one's love scorned and thrown aside! [*Turns her back to him, and wipes her eyes.*]

JAMES. [*Looks at her, then throwing away his cigarette, goes up to her.*] Carrie, what shall I say to obtain my forgiveness?

CARRIE. Nothing.

JAMES. Which means that you will give it to me without being entreated to do so?

CARRIE. Which means, Mr. Staunton, that nothing you could say would soften me; you have offended me too often.

JAMES. Carrie, I confess that I am no better than I should be.

CARRIE. Ah, that is true enough!

JAMES. My natural reserve, as I have been accustomed to call it, is merely pride.

CARRIE. That it is! and of the worst sort too.

JAMES. I have behaved very badly to you.

CARRIE. Indeed, indeed you have! [*Sobs.*]

JAMES. I do not deserve ever to be forgiven.

CARRIE. No.

JAMES. But—I on my side have some complaints to make against you.

CARRIE. What do you mean?

JAMES. It is an undoubted fact that you are an arrant little flirt.

CARRIE. I—a flirt!

JAMES. Yes, Miss Innocence, you—a flirt! that is the word, as poor Wilson certainly could testify.

CARRIE. Indeed? If I had but given Mr. Wilson the promise I gave you, he would have behaved very differently.

JAMES. Ah, would he indeed?

CARRIE. Most certainly.

JAMES. And pray how would he have behaved? Just tell me; I shall be only too glad to improve myself by studying how he would have acted if—— Pray go on.

CARRIE. He would always have been amiable.

JAMES. And so am I.

CARRIE. He would always have been at my beck and call. If I wished to ride on horseback, he would have wished it too; if I were inclined to be lazy, he would be lazy too, and sit quite contentedly playing with my embroidery silks, without speaking, until I chose to give him permission. He never would come into the drawing-room in the morning and exclaim—before even saying, “How d’ye do” — “For goodness’ sake, Carrie, don’t waste any more of your time over such rubbish!” He would——

JAMES. Well, the stuff you women call work, is rubbish !

CARRIE. Please not to interrupt me ; that is a thing Mr. Wilson never presumes to do——

JAMES. Bother Wilson !

CARRIE. He would never scold if I chose to have an amiable chat with—with persons who have been and always are kind to me.

JAMES. In point of fact he would have allowed you to flirt to your heart's content.

CARRIE. Mr. Staunton, allow—forbid, and other words of that description, I do not admit into my dictionary.

JAMES. Ah ! Then I presume you will alter the Marriage Service to suit your own convenience ?

CARRIE. The words of the Marriage Service are not all to be taken in their literal sense.

JAMES. I see ; you bring to your aid the very convenient doctrine of private interpretation.

CARRIE. It seems to me that we are needlessly wandering from our subject.

JAMES. That would be a pity indeed, since Mr. Wilson seems in your eyes to be gifted with every perfection. Pray continue, I feel myself rapidly getting to be a wiser and a better man.

CARRIE. Mr. Wilson would never talk of seeking

quiet corners to enjoy the companionship of a bold girl who squints.

JAMES. There comes in your injustice. Miss Conway is the best-looking girl I know.

CARRIE. Indeed! You are too flattering. Pray do not let me interfere with your proposed *tête-à-tête*. I will free you from my presence. I dare say Mr. Wilson is looking for me; I mean to give him all the dances he chooses to claim. He is the best waltzer I know.

JAMES. To repeat your own words, "Indeed! you are too flattering." Carrie, do not dance with that fellow—please.

CARRIE. And why not, pray?

JAMES. Because—because, Miss Burton, I forbid it.

CARRIE. That is delightful! You forbid it. I have the honour to wish you good evening.

JAMES. Carrie, if you care for me, you will yield that point. Promise not to dance with him.

CARRIE. I promise nothing of the sort.

JAMES. You know that though I may not be demonstrative yet I do love you most dearly.

CARRIE. You have given me many proofs of it, this evening.

JAMES. Dear Carrie, can you refuse me this little favour?

CARRIE. I do refuse it.

JAMES. [*Angrily turning his back to her.*] Very well, just as you please, Miss Burton.

CARRIE. [*Goes toward the door to the left, then turns back and peeps around at JAMES, who is impatiently tapping the floor with his foot; she goes up to him softly and puts her arm through his; he looks down at her and smiles.*] But you know, dear, she does squint——

JAMES. Well, I confess she does; and Carrie, you must allow that if Wilson does tear his hair out with rage at not getting you for a partner, it is very imprudent of him, for he has none to spare——

CARRIE. [*Laughs.*] He might be quite bald and I should not care. He is inclined to be stout too.

JAMES. I have always noticed, Carrie, that you like a good deal of vinegar in your salad.

CARRIE. That I do—I hate insipid things and—people.

JAMES. And you will believe me now, when I say that I do love you with my whole heart?

CARRIE. Yes.

JAMES. And you will dance with me the whole evening?

CARRIE. Yes.

JAMES. And you will not try to change the marriage service after all?

CARRIE. I do not know about that.

JAMES. Well, suppose we agree to leave that as the subject of our next discussion? The part I like about these—well we will agree to call them discussions—is, the making up.

CARRIE. And so do I. [*Laughing.*]

[*Exeunt L.*]

SCENE IV.

Enter MAURICE HEREFORD and LAURA MARSHALL, R., talking earnestly. They walk up and down the stage slowly.

LAURA. How did you obtain the boy's confidence? He was always so shy, so jealous of his secret.

MAURICE. True, and it was by mere accident that I discovered it. One day as I was lying idly on the deck, wondering if my mind was entirely stagnating, the wind blew a paper at my feet. Naturally, seeing some lines scrawled on it, I read this godsend to my idleness, and found that it was a sonnet to "Laura." I had scarcely read the last line when young Blake rushed at me, and I think wanted dreadfully to challenge me to mortal combat for my indiscretion. I assure you that my mind roused itself from its stagnation on the instant; all I possessed of eloquence,

of persuasion, I employed to win his confidence, and when at last he gave it to me I felt that I had accomplished one of the greatest conquests of my life.

LAURA. And so—he often spoke to you of me?

MAURICE. Very often, and I encouraged him in this amiable weakness.

LAURA. Then I scarcely see why, ever since you returned from your travels, you should so unmistakably have shunned me.

MAURICE. It was quite by accident that I discovered to-day that the boy's ideal Laura was Miss Marshall, the reigning belle. I humbly own also that I am afraid of belles. You see he never gave me your whole name; he had taken to reading Petrarch, and it pleased his fancy to identify himself with the poet; to me as well as to him, you were "Madonna Laura."

LAURA. I regret to have to descend from so high a pedestal. I can easily conceive that Miss Marshall is a creature far less interesting than my poor Ned's Laura; do not speak, I do not wish for a commonplace compliment. I only accept flattery when it is original. Tell me, was he still angry with me for my cruelty in sending him away?

MAURICE. Sometimes he grew rather Byronic on the subject; but there is such a foundation of good sense in his nature that he half admitted that you

were right. I first grew to respect the unknown original of my young friend's ideal, when I learnt how firmly and gently she had forced him from her side. You proved yourself a true-hearted woman, Miss Marshall; few would have resisted the temptation of playing with this young and sensitive heart, for scoff as one will at a boy's first love, there is something in it irresistibly fresh and fascinating. As he grows older he will recognize the folly of his hopes, but the memory of this beautiful dream will never leave him; it will keep him from all that is low, for he will measure all things by his first standard; it will deepen his nature, and I think make a true poet of him. Trust me, come what will, he will always bless the memory of his "Laura."

LAURA. Oh! that we might always live in a world like the world of that boy's imagination, and turn with his magnificent scorn from all that is mean and trivial. Oh, how distasteful does my life—the life of a mere woman of fashion, seem to me at this moment!

MAURICE. And yet there is no detail of our lives that we have not the power of glorifying. If we but chose to be sincere and simple like your boy lover, all things might be made to assume a deep meaning.

LAURA. [*Passionately.*] How?

MAURICE. [*Leading her to a seat.*] It pleases me to develop my theory half hidden in these flowering shrubs. Let us imagine that we two are isolated from the rest of humanity. How softly does the din of the outer world come to us in the cadences of the music which rise and fall almost inaudibly, and come dying at our feet like the waves of some mysterious sea. Let us imagine that the great bustling, cruel, material world holds its breath out of respect for our confidences; our only listeners are the half shut flowers whose breath mingles with our words; they understand us, "Madonna Laura." Let us for once abandon conventionalities; my soul speaks to your soul; listen to its voice; do not cruelly remind me where we are, what we are, and command my silence. Say, may I, without fear of offending, speak in all freedom?

LAURA. [*In a half audible voice.*] You may speak.

MAURICE. And yet how shall I? The thoughts that crowd in upon me are so fragile, so delicate in their nature, that they half dread being translated into words; they should have a language apart; a language composed half of music, half of perfume, which should reach the heart, through the medium of the senses. As I speak, there rises before me the picture of what might be; only to vivify it into life, one should ignore the dread practicabilities of life. My

picture represents happiness, and happiness is—love. Love, yes; and yet do not mistake it for the sentiment which passes current under that name in our everyday world. The love of which I dream is the complete blending of two natures into one; there should be no diversity of thoughts, of ideas, of feelings; one heart, one soul, one being, in fact. And do you think that with the aid of a sentiment like that, any accident of life would seem mean or trivial? All would be transfigured and made beautiful, do you not believe me?

LAURA. Poets have so dreamed—but it is only a dream. Love like this, never did, never will, exist.

MAURICE. And it is with lips all fresh with the dew of youth that you dare blaspheme? What! if my faith did but waver, I should lie down and say, “Let my day finish!” And yet I have lived much longer than you, I have seen the darker side of life, while you have seen but its fair side! Child, when you have suffered, you will believe.

LAURA. I have suffered—I do suffer!

MAURICE. You?

LAURA. Yes, I. What! are you, too, blind? Because you see me surrounded, flattered, bearing myself among my companions with a placid brow and a smiling face, you think that my heart is at peace? It is not; it cries out with a wild cry, it rebels against

the constraints which, in my pride, I impose upon it ; it will not be still, it will not be satisfied, and yet it must——Oh, I am mad to speak like this ! Why did you broach this subject ? What right had you to evoke the spirit which I thought was imprisoned in the deepest recess of my heart ? It is the thought of the young love which was lavished on me, and which I repulsed, that has moved me. Let us go back to the world from which, one moment, we have wandered.

MAURICE. No—linger yet a little, it is so sweet, so unutterably sweet to lift the veil of mere reality, and gaze unchecked into that inner life which, in the paucity of our language, we call the soul. Hush—one moment. I am in a heaven of delights, sensations long forgotten move me to the innermost depths of my nature. Oh, gentle lady, these exquisite moments of existence are so rare ; when they come do not let us chase them away ! Open your heart, as I open mine, and bid the vision of perfect happiness linger there, and make it nobler, better, and fitted for higher purposes than it was before. Will it harm either of us ? In a few minutes we shall awake from the trance, from the dream, or whatever it be—and looking back we may wonder perhaps—but certainly not regret. If, on the contrary, by a brusque employ of that detestable faculty,

common sense, we dispel the illusion, we shall mourn in vain for its return. Life is so hard that it was but just of nature to scatter a few roses on its stony path—let us stop and pick them, pressing them to our heart of hearts; believe me that even should there be thorns guarding the delicious fragrant blossoms, even should those thorns tear the trembling flesh and make it bleed, we shall not in after days regret the exquisite pain. Laura, gentle goddess of this hour, while I have been speaking, a flower, moved by some unfelt breeze has once or twice kissed your cheek; pick it, give it to me, and even when it lies on my heart, withered and sad, it shall speak to me of you—and that will be happiness in itself.

LAURA. [*Picks the flower, and gives it to him.*] Yes, I give it to you—but with a protest. I cannot follow you in that unreal region which exists only in your over-excited imagination. Life is made up of stern realities, not of dreams. I do not believe in love.

MAURICE. You do—you do! Your eyes belie your words.

LAURA. And do you then really believe in it?

MAURICE. Yes, I swear that I do. [*Takes her hand and kisses it.*]

LAURA. [*Seems struggling with herself, then by an*

effort snatches her hand away, and rising, confronts him, drawing herself up to her full height.] Yes, Mr. Hereford, you do believe in love, and I will tell you on what that faith, that noble sentiment which you have the power so well to describe is founded. Look into yourself and blush, if indeed you still can blush, to see how you tore away the semblance of love, of the highest feeling of which our fallen nature is capable, to travesty a sentiment which has no name. A mean, boasting vanity, which for its food craved my abasement; which boasted, which made a wager, that within a given time you should wrench from my quivering lips, an avowal of that very love whose name you have desecrated! I, Laura Marshall, was thus to become the theme of vulgar jests, of mean triumph to your—friends, who, taking sides with you, staked their money on the chance of my weakness! You forgot that you were not on the racecourse; you forgot that the animal on which you betted was possessed of intelligence, of feeling, of soul. Insult could go no further. Yet I who knew this thing have allowed you to approach me. I have listened to you, struggling against a mad desire to ignore my reason, to believe that in the rhapsodies with which you favoured me, there was a little genuine feeling. Oh! I am worthy of contempt indeed, since to tear myself from the thralldom

of your influence I was forced to remind myself over and over again of the real motive of your eloquence; to reflect that probably, hidden among those shrubs, there was some witness of this pretty scene of genteel comedy, one who would with native humour report the whole for the amusement of the club-room! Can you not already fancy the roars of laughter with which the delicate wit of the narrator would be received? In very truth, Mr. Hereford, you have succeeded in one part at least of your programme, for you have humbled me to the dust!

MAURICE. Miss Marshall, to your indignation I have nothing to oppose; except indeed this: your contempt of me is not greater than my loathing contempt of myself. I never sank lower in my own esteem; your words, your looks especially, have annihilated me.

LAURA. [*Clasping her hands vehemently.*] What had I done to you—what was my crime, that you should have singled me out for this?

MAURICE. You are the reigning belle, and deemed marvellously fascinating. I saw in you but one of a class—a class which in my time has made me suffer bitterly; I believed that you, like a woman whom I once knew and loved, were heartless. Let my excuse be, if excuse indeed is admissible, that I did not know you.

LAURA. And I then must suffer for the sins of another! But it is useless to continue these dreadful explanations—it is over; you have had your—flirtation; now go your way, and I will go mine. We are strangers from this moment.

MAURICE. Is my pardon then impossible?

LAURA. Quite.

MAURICE. You are right, my sin is too great. This atonement, at least, I can make; you shall never be reminded by my presence of this painful evening. A voluntary exile, I shall mourn my fault far from you, and dream of what—might have been.

LAURA. You—you will leave town?

MAURICE. This very night.

LAURA. Yes—that is as it should be. But others must not know of this; we must return to the ball-room, with placid faces, as we left it; and when you have resigned me to another partner, you can slip away unnoticed.

MAURICE. It is your part to command—mine to obey. But—this flower; this little flower already wilting in my hand, which speaks to me of a moment never to be forgotten by me—must I resign that too? Will you carry your cruelty—your justice, I mean—so far as to take even that from me?

LAURA. [*Looks up suddenly, then turns away, choking down a sob.*] You—may keep it.

MAURICE. Thank you—thank you a thousand times! Will you accept my arm?

[*Exeunt slowly, L.*]

SCENE V.

Enter JAMES STAUNTON from R.

JAMES. [*Looking after them.*] I scarcely like this; either I have never known Laura Marshall, or something very unusual has taken place and changed her completely; her very walk is different; I miss the proud turn of the head and the bright fearless glance; as she turned just now, I saw that her face was pale and drawn. Pshaw! What a mistake people make to look at life so very seriously. A flirtation—well and good, for everybody flirts more or less; but this strikes me as something beyond that harmless pastime. Hereford is a dreadful sort of fellow according to all accounts. [*Reflectively.*] I wonder how he manages—what the deuce is the secret of his fascination? I have a great mind to ask him! As for me, I cannot even keep my volatile Carrie in proper subjection, much less prove dangerous to the whole female world! [*Walks up and down.*] I might have known that she could not keep to her

good resolutions half an hour! As for me, I cannot understand the infatuation of some people for dancing; it is a stupid amusement and very undignified, especially for the male portion of creation; yet when I attempted to elucidate my theory on this subject, and put it in practice by refusing to take an eighth turn of a mad waltz, my gentle charmer left me in a pet, and the next moment was whirling around with that fellow Wilson, whom ten minutes before she had been ridiculing for my benefit. Ah, woman, woman!—dear me! I thought I was going to say something quite original on that fertile theme—but the inspiration has left me, and—I must console myself with a cigarette; I shall not be the first man whose eloquence has ended in smoke! The coast seems clear, and no one will be any the wiser for this dreadful infringement of the laws of refined society. [*Stretches himself in an easy-chair and lights his cigarette.*]

SCENE VI.

Enter MAURICE HEREFORD hastily, from L.

MAURICE. [*Excitedly.*] What shall I do?

JAMES. Take a cigar, my dear fellow—the best thing in the world for quieting the nerves and

enabling a man to look upon fickle dame Fortune with calm philosophy.

MAURICE. Ah, Staunton—you here? So much the better! If I had not met you I believe I should have been forced to indulge in a soliloquy.

JAMES. I say, who has won?

MAURICE. Staunton—if ever a man despised himself, I am that man. I vow I would give ten good years of my life to be able to undo this last folly of mine!

JAMES. Ten years—ahem! Yes, perhaps, but then they must be those that come between eighty and ninety. Come, be reasonable; no harm is done; you will lose your wager, perhaps—but you can very well afford it in every way.

MAURICE. No harm done! Ah, you should have seen her lashing me with her superb contempt! By Jove, I sadly wanted to make a fool of myself at her feet.

JAMES. Why did you not? Women do not often object to that sort of thing.

MAURICE. No, even my daring did not extend so far. She felt herself insulted, and with reason too, the only thing I could do was to retire. She believes me to be already gone.

JAMES. Yes, gone—to return to-morrow morning.

MAURICE. Gone, never to return.

JAMES. Nonsense, man. I begin to lose my respect for your knowledge of feminine nature; this is the greatest blunder you ever committed.

MAURICE. You see, when the heart speaks, reason often holds her peace.

JAMES. No—you do not really mean that—it is serious?

MAURICE. Serious—yes, by Jove, it is serious!

JAMES. [*Gives a low whistle.*] Whew! then you have but to wait, a little patience is all that is necessary. I would be willing to stake my right hand, that she is repenting her severity at this very moment.

MAURICE. You are not in earnest?

JAMES. Yes, I am though. Hush! here come our two fair ladies in the full mystery of confidence. Quick, this way.

MAURICE. What do you mean?

JAMES. This is not the time for over scrupulousness. These shrubs evidently grew here for our special convenience—not a moment is to be lost. [MAURICE HEREFORD *makes a gesture of dissent, but JAMES pushes him back of the shrubs and follows him.*]

SCENE VII.

Enter LAURA and CARRIE talking earnestly, from R.

CARRIE. And is this all?

LAURA. I scarcely know; I am so wretched that my very memory seems to fail me.

CARRIE. Now, let me recapitulate. You let him entangle himself in a love scene, an undoubted love scene; you kept back, venturing on no expression of your own feelings—then when he had gone far enough, you opened fire on him,—and I have no doubt that you did not spare him either! Very well. He has lost, and you——

LAURA. And I—have lost too!

CARRIE. How lost?

LAURA. Lost because—because Carrie—Oh, how I long to call him back, to humble my overweening pride—to—but what am I saying! [*Covers her face with her hands.*]

CARRIE. But Laura, this is decidedly beyond the permitted limits of a flirtation.

LAURA. Flirtation—how I hate the word! If I had my way I would erase it, not only from our dictionaries, but from our lives.

CARRIE. Permit me to say that I am glad you

have not the power of doing so—I like not only the word, but the thing.

LAURA. What! was the divine power of loving given to us that we should fritter it away in the service of our miserable vanities? Oh, I wish I had the powers of the satirists, I would lash not so much the real vices of the world—these find chastisers enough—but I would attack incessantly, remorselessly, these innocent sins of modern society. Carrie, we desecrate the better part of ourselves when we condescend to flirt. We call it harmless. I believe in my heart that there never was a harmless flirtation yet! The fruit that has passed through many hands may indeed be intact, but where is its bloom? And what makes the great glory of the peach, if it be not its bloom and its delicate perfume. I—were it in my province to choose—would pick my peach from the tree myself, would seek for it in some modest corner where many eyes had not seen it; I would take it and say with pride, “This is all mine.” I tell you, Carrie, if I were a man, I would never marry a girl who had stooped to one serious flirtation!

CARRIE. [*Looking around.*] Oh, how you frighten me! What a mercy James cannot hear you! You have the most dangerous theories! Fortunately to-morrow you will have forgotten all about them.

LAURA. Perhaps. One's practice rarely tallies very exactly with one's theory. To-morrow—why does that word make me shudder? I think I am cold and ill—and oh, Carrie, so very, very sad!

CARRIE. My poor darling!—how I pity you that you should look so deeply into things! It is so much pleasanter to glance lightly at sorrow, and pass quickly by. There is so much sunshine in life, why should we seek the shade? Beside, remember dear, at one word of yours——

LAURA. [*Quickly.*] Hush! do not tempt me, I will never see him again—and yet——

CARRIE. [*Putting her arms about her.*] And yet what?

LAURA. And yet I—I love him, I love him so entirely! Listen. I have loved him from the moment when I first saw him. He shunned me, this I felt, and it did but make the tyranny of my thoughts more constant. When I heard of this dreadful wager, I think I felt more pain to see him debased by his own act, than indignation for myself. Still I must never see him again!

[*Bursts into tears.*]

SCENE VIII.

MAURICE HEREFORD *springs forward, followed by*
JAMES STAUNTON.

MAURICE. Laura—you must, you do, see him again!

LAURA. [*Screams, and freeing herself from CARRIE'S embrace, stands in angry confusion—after a pause.*] Had you not sinned enough against me? Was my humiliation not complete enough to satisfy you?

JAMES. It was I who forced him——

LAURA. Do not you speak! Surely he is man enough to take the responsibility of his own acts. What, Maurice Hereford, you wished to tear from me even the last shred of esteem which might serve to dignify my mad love for you—yes, my love for you. I am too proud to deny what cannot be denied; beside, you are not the only one, it seems, who enjoyed the confession which I thought to make only to one faithful heart. Mr. Staunton, congratulate your noble friend; he has won his wager; it is not yet midnight and I have avowed my weakness—a weakness which you see is not without its value, since it puts money in his pocket.

JAMES. You mistake, Miss Marshall; Hereford

N

has lost; the clock struck twelve as you and Carrie entered.

MAURICE. Laura—do not turn from me so disdainfully. I confess my wrong; I was worthy of all contempt, but I think I have purchased the right to be pitied, for I too have suffered. You will perhaps not believe me, but as you and I sat yonder, as I looked at you, doing homage to the qualities of your mind and heart, reflected as they were on your ever-changing face, I swear that I forgot completely the vile motive which induced me to seek that interview; forgot it as completely as I wish I could make you forget it now. Laura, you have seen me at my worst, and if even thus you could find something in me not quite unworthy of love, may I not hope that a life-long devotion may win from you the forgiveness of this—flirtation? At your feet I throw, not only my repentance, but the offer of all I am and may be. Do not steel your heart against me, do not refuse to be my wife.

LAURA. Oh, no—no! A love engendered as ours has been, could never prosper!

MAURICE. There you mistake. Beside, nothing else would probably have broken through the cynicism which for years had hardened and embittered my nature. I think the first time that my heart stirred within me was while listening to that boy poet,

dreaming aloud of his Laura; I instinctively felt that one who could inspire a devotion like his must be truly noble and great.

JAMES. Ned would doubtless be much gratified if he could learn what an effect his descriptions had produced.

MAURICE. You are more nearly right in your conjecture than you think. As we took leave of each other, he whispered, "It is only to one like you that I would resign her without bitterness." [*He converses with LAURA in a low and eager tone.*]

JAMES. [*Looking askance at CARRIE, who folds her hands with an expression of unconscious innocence.*] Miss Caroline Burton!

CARRIE. [*Dropping a curtsy.*] Mr. James Staunton!

JAMES. I beg to inform you that I am highly edified by your views on certain subjects—views which opened my eyes considerably.

CARRIE. I am glad that I have been the humble means of conveying light to the darkened mind.

JAMES. What do you mean by your defence of the abominable practice of flirting? When you are my wife, madam, I shall know how to change your opinion on the subject.

CARRIE. [*Sings, in imitation of Zerlina.*] "Batti, batti, O bel Masetto!" [*Interrupting herself.*] Beside,

sir, listeners never do hear anything to their advantage.

JAMES. Heigh ho! there is no withstanding you. I verily believe that you are a little witch—but promise, you never, never will again.

CARRIE. No not—until the next good opportunity!

LAURA. [*To MAURICE.*] This may be unpardonable weakness on my part, but if it is—well, I am willing to bear the shame. Beside, I dare not retract my word, and I said that I—loved you.

MAURICE. Believe me, Laura, you shall never have cause to regret that sweet avowal, and we may both look back with joy to our—flirtation.

WEATHER-BOUND.

A Comedietta in one Act.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MISS KATE MOWBRAY.

CAPTAIN DUNROY.

WEATHER-BOUND.

SCENE I.

The library in MISS MOWBRAY'S country house. A table in one corner with a tray of refreshments. MISS MOWBRAY very simply dressed, reading a letter.

MISS M. Shall I have courage to carry out my plan? Now that the time draws near, I begin to tremble! Well, this is a new phase of my character. What—Kate Mowbray afraid! Kate, the fearless, the self-reliant, falter in her purpose? Nonsense! let me but re-read his words and I shall find resolution in my very indignation! When Captain Dunroy wrote this letter to his old chum he did not take into consideration that that old chum's wife was my staunchest friend and ally, who, as a matter of course, sent me the document by the first mail. [*Looks once more at the letter.*] Dear, what a nice hand he writes! so firm—so full of character. To think that

after so long an absence the "Cousin Jack" of my childish fancy should still hold so prominent a place in my thoughts! and that, too, in spite of reason, in spite of his complete and mortifying oblivion of his baby love, in spite of this most discourteous letter! Well, this is mere foolishness. How many times I have read these words! [*Reads.*] "You will scarcely be surprised, my dear fellow, at my sudden return to England. All the world, that is, all our little world, knows of my grandfather's eccentric will, which decrees, that unless I choose to fulfil his wishes, I shall lose the whole estate. I was off so far in the mountains at the time of his death, something more than a year ago, that the news, together with the summons home, was months in reaching me. So, either I must marry that little Kate, whom I only remember as a turbulent child, eternally calling after 'Cousin Jack,' and crying for sweetmeats, or—I must give up all hope of my rightful inheritance! This is rather hard on a fellow, you must allow. The girl, who is the most distant of distant relatives, had no real claim on my grandfather, except, indeed, that he was dotingly fond of her. From what I hear, I gather that Miss Mowbray has grown up the very counterpart of the thousand or more young ladies who 'come out' every year. Oh, Harry, Harry! we all of us, perchance, have dreamed a

dream. Behold the difference between the ideal and the real. On the one hand, a girl, whose thoughts are transparent in their crystal-like purity, who has not forgotten the sweet weakness of blushing; one who is simple in her tastes, modest in her dress, who is intelligent yet unpretending, well informed yet more anxious to acquire further knowledge than to exhibit that which she already possesses, who is ever tender yet strong. On the other, a woman, who, from the soles of her tortured feet to the highest frizzle of her hair is—false, false! whose charms are bought, and who herself is to be bought by the highest bidder!—Well, well, if I lash myself into such violent indignation I shall find myself returning to tiger hunting by the first boat, and that I have no intention of doing just yet. I must see for myself, and then, by George! if in Kate Mowbray I find the usual type of fashionable girlhood, I will make her my best bow, leaving my fortune in my stead.” [*After a pause.*] And I like him for it! yet he deserves to be well punished for his mistrust of me. Let me see—is all ready? Yes, the servants have their orders, and the moment his foot crosses the threshold I cease to be Kate and become simple Lucy Calton, Miss Mowbray’s demure companion. [*Looks at herself in the mirror.*] Yes, do I not look like one simple in her tastes, modest in

her dress? ha! ha! [*Door bell rings.*] Oh, here he comes! [*Peeps out of window.*] I can catch a glimpse of a man's overcoat—how it rains! Was ever such a storm!—Now to my hiding place.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE II.

Enter CAPTAIN DUNROY.

CAPTAIN. [*Speaking to some one outside.*] Send me the companion—by no means? I shall do very well with the books till your mistress comes home—Be home soon? Very well, in the meantime, if I should want anything, I will ring. [*Shuts the door and comes forward.*] Companion, indeed! some fusty, frowsy, old woman, paid so much a month for playing propriety to the young lady. I hate old women! In point of fact, I hate all women, young and old, just now. Whew—such a storm! I would not send a dog out in such weather, and yet I travel, the devil knows how many miles, rather than fail at an appointment, which I now find the lady has not chosen to keep on her side—but when did a fashionable woman ever keep her promise? What business has she to be visiting at the Manor House when she knew I was to arrive to-day? It is a slight, a downright slight—I have a good mind to—[*Goes towards*

the window.] No chance of escape! I am regularly weather-bound. Now, I remember, that fellow, Doyle, did speak of one Sir Peter Curry, who was staying at the Manor House, and who—by Jove! I believe there is something in it—not that I care! She may fall in love with Lucifer himself if she chooses, only she might know that Sir Peter is considered the greatest snob in England. Well! I am in for it, and I might as well make myself comfortable. [*Looks around the room.*] Cosy place this; as a boy, I remember there were more books scattered on the tables, and fewer flowers, and pretty trifles about. Ah, here is a ‘Times.’ When a man has the ‘Times’ to help him to grumble at the world withal, he need not consider himself hard up. Perhaps with its help I may hope to forget that I am bound on a fool’s errand. [*Unfolds the paper, lights a cigarette, and settling himself luxuriously in one arm-chair, puts his feet on another.*]

SCENE III.

Enter MISS MOWBRAY, demurely, a work basket in her hand. She curtseys, without being noticed, then quietly sits down, takes out some work and begins to sew.

MISS M. [*After a short silence.*] Ha—hum!—

CAPTAIN. [*Starting.*] Eh! what!—who's there?

MISS M. Please, Captain Dunroy, it is only I, Lucy Calton.

CAPTAIN. And who the—I beg your pardon—who is Miss Lucy Calton?

MISS M. The companion—Miss Mowbray's companion. She said I was to come in and entertain you.

CAPTAIN. Indeed, it is very kind of her, to be sure; it seems to me she might have taken the task upon herself. Pray Miss—Miss Calton, do not let me take up your valuable time. Since Miss Mowbray has not thought fit to keep her appointment, I do not require any one to take her place. [*Begins to read.*]

MISS M. [*Quietly carries the tray of refreshments and places it on a table at CAPTAIN DUNROY'S elbow.*] Sherry or port, Captain Dunroy? [*He does not answer.*] Please, I was to offer you some wine.

CAPTAIN. Wine? Thanks—none! [*Looks up.*] Well, on second thoughts, a glass of sherry might not be amiss after such a drive as mine—that is if you will join me. No?—then you must at least promise to forgive my rudeness of just now. To own the truth I am in the most savage of tempers—and not without cause—that my most bitter enemy would allow.

MISS M. [*Sits down, takes up her work and looks up furtively at CAPTAIN DUNROY, who enjoys the cake and wine with evident relish ; a short silence.*] Captain Dunroy, will you be good enough to tell me something ?

CAPTAIN. Certainly, if that something be within the range of my intellect. Well, what is it ?

MISS M. [*In a distressed manner.*] Please—what, what must I do to entertain you ?

CAPTAIN. Entertain me ! Why—ha ! ha !—why should you think it necessary to entertain me ?

MISS M. Because Miss Mowbray said I must, and I dare not go away, much as——

CAPTAIN. Much as you would like to, eh ?

MISS M. No, not that exactly, only—[*looking down*]—only I know you would rather be alone.

CAPTAIN. Now, my dear young lady, suppose we both agree to say exactly what we think ? I own that five minutes ago I wished you—well, let us say, three rooms off ; but then I was a brute. Now, whether it is owing to the influence of this excellent sherry, or the influence of—something else, I am well pleased that you should remain. As to the best way of entertaining me, I have a plan to propose : suppose you change your individuality for the time being ; suppose I call you Kate Mowbray instead of Lucy Calton ? Now how do you

fancy Miss Mowbray would act under like circumstances?

MISS M. Oh, I know just how she would do, I have watched her so often! Then this is to be a sort of game of make believe, is it?

CAPTAIN. Exactly. A game well known and much in vogue in society from the nursery upward.

MISS M. But if I call you Captain Dunroy, the charm will be broken; you must be somebody else, too, or else the game would not be fair. Suppose I call you—Sir Peter——

CAPTAIN. Sir Peter!—why Sir Peter, rather than Sir Paul or Sir John?

MISS M. Oh, because it comes more naturally of course.

CAPTAIN. Of course, eh? Then I am to conclude that that arch-booby, Sir Peter Curry, is a very frequent visitor?

MISS M. Very frequent—so you know him? That makes it all the easier for you to personate him. You must look more pompous, more like this. [*Mimics a pompous fop.*] Now, shall we begin?

CAPTAIN. If you like. Shall I drop my r's?

MISS M. Yes, yes—just like that! [*Laughs with great enjoyment, then assumes the airs of a spoilt beauty.*] Ah, Sir Peter, there is no trusting you,

you are so complimentary. Men are such dreadful flatterers——

CAPTAIN. Flattewews, Miss Mowbway ! 'Pon my soul I never flattewed you ; you are aw—quite above flattewy—aw'.

MISS M. [*Shaking her finger at him.*] Naughty, naughty !—what was it you said to me last evening in Mrs. Goldwin's conservatory——You do not answer——perhaps you have already forgotten—or perhaps you wish to—to retract ?

CAPTAIN. Faiwest Kate, I wetwact nothing ! only——aw——there's that confounded cousin of yours who is coming to——

MISS M. [*With affected carelessness.*] Oh, do not let that trouble you—a mere childish affair, I assure you, easily disposed of. A rough Indian officer could scarcely be to my taste after having enjoyed the advantages of—of refined society. You know, Sir Peter, it is as easy nowadays to break a will as for——

CAPTAIN. [*In his natural voice, angrily.*] As for a worldly woman to break her word ! Ah, I see how it is ! You shall find, Miss Mowbray, that the rough officer is not so easily disposed of as you think. I will marry you—out of spite !

MISS M. [*Resuming the manner of* LUCY CALTON.] Please, Captain Dunroy, do not be angry ; remember that we were only playing at “make believe.”

CAPTAIN. Playing at "make believe," ha! ha! so we were! By Jove I had almost forgotten it. [*Sitting by her.*] You see, Miss Lucy—may I call you Miss Lucy?—you have studied from the life, that is very evident. So, my worst fears are realized; Kate Mowbray is a heartless, worthless flirt?

MISS M. [*Distressed.*] Oh no, no! I shall never forgive myself if my foolish mimicry has given you such an impression. Please believe me when I say, that Miss Mowbray, though perhaps a little spoiled by flattery, has an excellent heart.

CAPTAIN. It is much to your credit to say so, and you will almost make me believe it if you look at me so with those earnest eyes, full of tears. But I may require you to prove your assertions. Will you permit me to ask you a question or two? I was told, on my arrival, that the lady of the house, notwithstanding the weather, which is certainly not favourable to visiting, chose to break her engagement with me, rather than give up a déjeuner or some such tomfoolery over at the Manor House. It is natural to conclude that some strong attraction or other caused her so far to forget her duty as hostess. [*Carelessly.*] Do you happen to know the names of the other guests?

MISS M. Oh yes, there is Lady Severn with the Misses Severn; then there is Mr. McFarland and Major Tomkins; and—and——

CAPTAIN. And who else?

MISS M. And—Sir Peter Curry; but I assure you——

CAPTAIN. [*Pacing the room, angrily.*] Assure me of nothing! There, there! do not look so frightened, child! I have no murderous intentions as yet—Why should I care? Still that sort of thing hurts a man's pride, which, after all, amounts to about the same thing as wounding his heart! [*Goes to the window.*] The rain is coming down in torrents. If I were to attempt to run over I should cut such a forlorn figure that the girl would be justified in laughing at me. Well, I must make the best of a desperate position. [*Goes back and takes a seat by Miss M.*] So, Miss Lucy, you will not hear this friend and patroness of yours abused; and why, pray?

MISS M. Because she has been kind to me—in her way.

CAPTAIN. And may I ask what “her way” is?

MISS M. I scarcely know how to explain. When we are alone she lets me kiss her, and she tells me her secrets. When there is company of course she does not notice me.

CAPTAIN. Why not?

MISS M. Because I am only the companion.

CAPTAIN. Ah, indeed, a mighty reason! You are

pleading your friend's cause bravely; I begin to have the greatest respect for Miss Mowbray; she is almost as kind to you as to her pet dog, hey? Still, of course, she expects from you the service of your brain—you must entertain her, read to her? You are well educated, that I guess from your manner of speaking?

MISS M. I was educated for a governess; and now pray listen while I tell you what I owe to Miss Mowbray. I am a distant relative of the family, belonging to that poorer branch of it which, through unfortunate marriages, sank into entire obscurity. Indeed I was born in the village near by, and it was only by accident that my connection with the family was discovered; I think it was my remarkable likeness to Miss Mowbray which first caused investigations to be made——

CAPTAIN. So you and Miss Kate look alike? Well, that is the first thing I have heard in her favour. Are you really very much alike?

MISS M. If we were dressed in each other's clothes I might be mistaken for her. But, as it is, she seems a hundred times handsomer, for you know she gets all her things from Paris.

CAPTAIN. Indeed! So you fancy that I would think her prettier than you?

MISS M. Why of course! But as I was saying,

little Miss Kate—we were both children of about the same age—insisted that I should be sent to school. This was done, and I was from the age of ten educated with the view of becoming 'a governess—— But I am afraid this is not what Miss Mowbray meant when she said I was to entertain you. My poor little history cannot interest you.

CAPTAIN. But it does interest me very much. I can almost picture to myself the quiet little figure going from school duty to school duty, looked down upon by the more fashionable pupils, and bullied by the teachers.

MISS M. How can you guess things like that? You never saw me at school.

CAPTAIN. How do you know that, little lady? I may have an invisible cap like the prince in the fairy tale. Well, and did you go out as a governess?

MISS M. Yes; and I was so unhappy! I am afraid I do not like constant work, and it is hard to be always snubbed—is it not?

CAPTAIN. Rather. I should like to have the court-martialing of your snubbers, that's all! How came you to be delivered from the house of bondage?

MISS M. Ah! now we come to Miss Mowbray's goodness. She heard that I was all but ill, and

much in need of rest and country air, so she immediately sent for me, and I have been here ever since.

CAPTAIN. I see; she has moments of thoughtless generosity—(not, however, that I see any particular generosity in wishing to have you near her), which are expected to counterbalance hours—days of selfishness! What are your duties?

MISS M. So light! I wash her poodle every day in eau-de-cologne. I disentangle the silks and wools of her embroidery. I write her notes, read her to sleep after a party. Then, of course, when her maid has a holiday I dress her and put on—I mean—I do her hair.

CAPTAIN. The first expression is the correct one, I make no doubt. Tell me, what do you do with your spare time?

MISS M. [*Eagerly.*] I read and study. Just think! I have all the books at my command; only there is no one to advise me in my choice, and sometimes I get discouraged.

CAPTAIN. Poor little thing! such a lonely life in the midst of a crowd—for I can well imagine that Miss Mowbray has always plenty of people staying with her. Well, and does this satisfy you? Are you happy, Miss Lucy?

MISS M. [*Looks up suddenly, then droops her head.*] Why do you ask? [*Her voice falters.*]

CAPTAIN. Why, child—child ! I did not mean to distress you. [*A short silence.*] Come, come, Miss Lucy, do not look so sorrowful, or I shall never forgive myself.

MISS M. [*Controlling herself.*] Oh, I am quite myself again. What shall I do to amuse you ? Shall I sing, or play chequers, or the piano ?

CAPTAIN. No, nor dance either. I once had apartments next to a boarding-school famous for musical instruction, I have hated the piano ever since—except, indeed, when it is played very softly, just at dusk.

MISS M. How did you guess that I played like that ?

CAPTAIN. You should know by this time, Miss Lucy, that I am a very Yankee for guessing. Miss Mowbray is a pianist also, I presume.

MISS M. Oh yes, everybody must know that ; she plays the noisiest dance music and operatic arrangements that can be procured for money. That is—I mean—she is considered a very brilliant player.

CAPTAIN. Exactly. Well, now, that you are quite yourself, tell me why you were so overcome by my simple question ?

MISS M. Must I really tell you ?

CAPTAIN. Indeed you must.

MISS M. It was because—oh, I am so alone in the world !—I have no parents, no brother or sister !—

There is no one being to whom, in my sadness, I can go and tell my little sorrow or pain. No one to whom in my hours of gaiety—for I am often happy without knowing why, just as the birds are happy—there is no one who will listen to my merry nonsense, and be glad with me. I have occasionally met with kindness and indulgence,—never, never, with sympathy, and I crave it so!—[*Interrupting herself.*] Please, Captain Dunroy, do not be angry with me—you forced me to speak.

CAPTAIN. Angry with you! It would be as reasonable for me to be angry with the flowers for giving forth their rich perfume. But why should you speak so despondingly, that sympathy which you crave, and which is the natural due of one like you, may still be yours. After Miss Mowbray's own marriage, she may have leisure to look out for a husband for you, and in him—you——

MISS M. [*Looking down.*] Oh no, no! please do not speak so. I shall never marry.

CAPTAIN. Never marry, nonsense! That is what all girls say until the propitious moment comes for changing their minds—hey?

MISS M. But I am not like other girls.

CAPTAIN. Perhaps you think that marriage would be difficult for you, because, by education and associations, you are above those from whom you

sprang? But that is an idle fear, for it must be next to impossible to converse with you without feeling drawn to you—without falling in love—I mean—that is, you are far too attractive to pass unnoticed. Was that what made you think you would never marry?

MISS M. Perhaps——yet, no—that is——there is another reason——

CAPTAIN. [*After a little hesitation.*] Would it be an unpardonable indiscretion to ask what that other reason is?

MISS M. I scarcely know how to——

CAPTAIN. Just fancy yourself alone and indulging in a comforting little soliloquy.

MISS M. I——

CAPTAIN. Well.

MISS M. I have allowed an ideal to take possession of my imagination—perhaps of my heart, and I can love nothing lower.

CAPTAIN. An ideal? That is not as alarming as it might be. Pray is it a simple ideal, or one based on a living original?

MISS M. [*Covering her face with her hands.*] I cannot tell you! Please—please do not ask!

CAPTAIN. Do not tremble so; it would be unmanly to press your confidence. But come! look up with one of your own smiles; it hurts me to see you

look sad! Have you no diverting history of rejected lovers to tell me—come, confess, there has been one at least who broke a lance for your sweet sake?

MISS M. You forget—I am only the companion—— But, please, I ought not to talk so much about myself, Miss Mowbray might object.

CAPTAIN. But if I do not object, is not that all-sufficient?

MISS M. I am afraid not. [*Uneasily.*] May I not offer you some more wine?

CAPTAIN. [*Laughing.*] Your idea of entertainment is a little on the pattern of an innkeeper's, is it not, Miss Lucy—refreshing the inner man, eh? She seems to be a sad tyrant, that Miss Mowbray; I wonder if she will succeed in keeping me in as good order as she does her companion. I am afraid I am in a fair way of becoming a hen-pecked husband.

MISS M. [*Slyly.*] Many a true word is said in jest.

CAPTAIN. You frighten me. [*Laughs.*] Well, since you are so anxious to obey orders, let us see if we cannot manage to have you do so, and yet at the same time, please me. Do you know, I have a notion to talk, and to be listened to by a sweet, demure maiden.

MISS M. Is the maiden expected to remain quite silent?

CAPTAIN. No. The demure maiden may at times

venture on some such uncompromising rejoinder as "Indeed!" "Yes," "I never should have thought so." Now, are you ready—may I begin?

MISS M. Yes.

CAPTAIN. Then, sweet maiden, listen while I tell you a story. Turn a little this way that I may look at you—all poets and romancers need a motive of inspiration, and I wish to draw mine from your eyes. Mine is a very simple story, so do not expect anything sensational. Once upon a time——

MISS M. How I like the stories that begin with "Once upon a time."

CAPTAIN. That is not within the range of permitted answers. However, for once, the offence is pardoned. Well, then, once upon a time, a young man was created——

MISS M. Was he never a baby?

CAPTAIN. Hush! Remember that the penalty of unauthorized interruptions may be of whatever nature I choose! This young man went out into the world, and fought his way in a land heated by a tropical sun and swarming with tigers and other wild animals. The life was rough and often uncongenial, for selfishness and evil passions were rife among his companions. Perhaps in the midst of strife and noise the remembrance of better things, familiar to him in a previous stage of existence, kept

this young man somewhat apart from his rough fellows, and kept alive in his heart of hearts an ideal which he silently worshipped; an ideal of purity, of unselfishness, of tender devotion. Do you wonder that he vowed to himself that if ever he should find the realization of this ideal, in the shape of a mortal maiden, he would woo, and perchance be happy enough to wed her? Whether he found her in a palace or in a cottage, high born or low born, he determined to use all the strength of his nature, bring to bear all the eloquence of his tongue to win her for himself.

MISS M. And did he find her?

CAPTAIN. You shall hear. Fate showed him a woman, rich, fair, and young, and bade him marry her. But she was not his ideal and he turned aside; in doing so he perceived another maiden close to her—as indeed a sweet violet may bloom by the side of a flaunting poppy,—and though he was about to pass it by, the sweet fragrance of youth and innocence reached his senses, and he said——

MISS M. What did he say?

CAPTAIN. He said: Sweet, gentle, tender-hearted Lucy, I have sought you long, to find you at last more lovely than my dream! Lucy—do you not understand me—is not my story plain enough?

MISS M. And I—I am the ideal?

CAPTAIN. Indeed, indeed you are!

MISS M. I, the companion!—the unknown, unprized, girl! Oh, no! you are making cruel sport of me.

CAPTAIN. Making sport of you! You must have a very low opinion of me to imagine such a thing!

MISS M. Oh, now I dare tell you all—now I dare tell you how, from the frequent repetition of your name, I grew curious to learn more about “Cousin Jack,” and what I heard pleased me more than I may say. There is an old portrait of you as a boy here, and I have watched that portrait till to me it grew a living being. Then, too, once when I was an unknown village child, I was surrounded by a tormenting crowd of rough boys; I grew frightened, when a clear strong voice was heard above the din, and a boy rushed at the largest of my tormentors, and soon dispersed them all. Then, finding that my childish sorrow was only increased by the sight of his hurts, he took me on his knee, kissed me, and to console me, gave me this! [*Draws from her dress a medal.*] Do you remember, Cousin Jack—the silver prize medal you won at school?

CAPTAIN. So your champion was myself? I must own I did not remember having made your acquaintance so many years ago. I have indeed some vague remembrance of a good fight of that sort, but

I fancied little Kate had been the cause of it. See how one's youthful memories grow confused. Then, sweet Lucy, I need no longer fear that vague ideal of which I own I was jealous a short time since?

MISS M. [*As though remembering, then starting back.*] Oh, what have I said and done? I have been guilty of the blackest treachery and ingratitude!

CAPTAIN. How?

MISS M. You came here to woo Miss Mowbray, and I—I, miserable girl that I am, have listened to your love! You must forget it all, it is as though you had said nothing.

CAPTAIN. Indeed! that is a proposal to which I cannot listen for a moment.

MISS M. But, Captain Dunroy—

CAPTAIN. Say "Cousin Jack," you have as much right to do so as Miss Mowbray.

MISS M. That is true. Captain—Cousin Jack, I must leave you at once. Oh, what have I done!

CAPTAIN. What have you done? Why, made me the proudest and happiest of men. Lucy, listen to me. I came here resolved, if I found Miss Mowbray what I expected to find her, to leave at once, abandoning to her my fortune. There is no change in my plan, except indeed that I do not intend now to go away alone. We shall be poor, but to one

who has known the drudgery of a governess' life, my comparative poverty will not seem hard to bear. What, not a word, Lucy?

MISS M. Yes, I must find words, sharp and decisive, that will give a death blow to my dream of happiness! I will not turn traitress!

CAPTAIN. That is a hard epithet. Come, come Lucy, listen to reason. I have determined to reject Kate Mowbray and to marry you; nothing shall shake my resolution.

MISS M. [*Goes to the window.*] Oh, there she is! What shall we do, what shall we do?

CAPTAIN. [*Alarmed.*] The devil! What could have induced her to come back just at the wrong moment? Never mind, Lucy, I will face her, and tell her the honest truth; I—I am not afraid. Do you think she will come to this room at once?

MISS M. [*Rushing to the door.*] Stay! I, I will go to her! It is right that I should bear the first violence of her anger! [*Exit.*]

SCENE IV.

CAPTAIN DUNROY *alone.*

CAPTAIN. [*Pacing up and down uneasily.*] 'Pon my word, this is an awkward predicament for a man

to find himself in! To come all the way from India to make love to one woman, and because she chances not to be at home, to propose to another! Jack Dunroy—Jack Dunroy! it has a bad sound—not that I would act otherwise if the thing had to be done over. I would not give up that sweet Lucy Calton for ten Miss Mowbrays—no, not if each had a fortune in her apron pocket! Still there is no denying that I am in what our Yankee brethren would call “a regular fix.” How shall I meet her? What shall I say? Brave little Lucy! to insist on breaking the news to her. Women have far more moral courage than we, there is no denying that fact. By Jove! I believe I am a little nervous. Well, I have always noticed that looking over photographic albums has a soothing effect on a man, suppose I try it. Here is one heavy enough to contain a large dose of calming fluid. [*Sits down with a photographic album in his hands.*] I wonder if the young lady herself figures among these beauties. Here is a stout girl, there is a thin one, both evidently just from the hairdresser’s hands, and between them a fop, likewise just from the barber’s; I wonder if it is Sir Peter? Oh, of course not. Sir Peter would be simpering from the same page as the fair Kate, and neither of these young ladies bears the slightest resemblance to Lucy. The

charm is beginning to work; blessed be the man who invented photographic albums! It is such a soothing thing to discover so many people uglier than oneself. [*Turns over several pages, then starts.*] Why, this is Lucy herself! Yet it cannot be; there is a Parisian look about that toilette which simple Lucy's dress certainly lacks. Is it—can it be Kate? the most marvellous likeness!—and, by Jove! if that is not a photograph taken from my portrait in the Highland dress! It occupies the place of honour in which I expected to find Sir Peter's booby face. Upon my soul! the girl has taste. Who knows, report may have calumniated her; a woman who has Lucy's truthful eyes must be good. The more I look at it, the more the likeness grows. I feel entirely bewildered. Awkward for a man to marry a girl who has a living prototype, it might lead to odd mistakes. Poor Lucy! I wonder how she has managed her disagreeable task; evidently it takes some time. I think I hear voices. [*Puts down the album hastily.*] There is no escape possible, I suppose. Faith, I would rather face a battery diabolically improved by modern ingenuity, than the anger of a slighted woman!

SCENE V.

Enter MISS MOWBRAY fashionably dressed.

MISS M. [*Pretending to speak to some one outside.*] Not another word!—excuses indeed, after such conduct! Let me never see your hated face again! [*Advances toward CAPTAIN DUNROY, who bows low, and who, during the early part of the interview keeps his eyes fixed on the ground.*] So, Captain Dunroy, it is thus you and I meet?

CAPTAIN. I have but one word of apology to offer, Miss Mowbray—an apology which, I fear, will but irritate you still further: I love Lucy Calton.

MISS M. But it is absurd—ridiculous! An interview of an hour with an unformed school-girl suffices to make you break your faith as a gentleman—do not answer! I repeat it: break your faith as a gentleman, the faith pledged for you by your grandfather! Indeed, Captain! let me congratulate you on the tenderness and susceptibility of your heart! [*Laughs, then stops suddenly.*] Have you not a word to say? My anger is not worth deprecating, I suppose—you irritate me, sir!

CAPTAIN. You bade me just now not to answer you: I obeyed—that tribute, at least, I could pay.

MISS M. [*Looks at him some moments in silence.*]

I presume you feel no curiosity about your grandfather's reason for making such a will.

CAPTAIN. I should not think reason had anything to do with it.

MISS M. Really your regard for my feelings is exquisite. He made that will, because he discovered not long before his death that I—I cared for the memory of "Cousin Jack" as I cared for nothing else in the world, and he thought!—Oh!—[*Bursts into tears.*]

CAPTAIN. [*Aside.*] This is very embarrassing. I seem formed to be the ideal of small children!

MISS M. [*With dignity.*] You have seen the last of Kate Mowbray's weakness; I had hoped my pride would have kept my tears back, but my heart would not be entirely subdued. I have but one word to add: marry Lucy Calton, she is worthier of your love than I. As to your fortune, you cannot think so meanly of me as to suppose I would accept it under such circumstances.

CAPTAIN. Miss Mowbray—Cousin Kate!

MISS M. Yes—Cousin Kate—that at least I can still be to you. You shall see that a woman can on occasion be generous; I promise you to care for your wife as for—myself.

CAPTAIN. Noble-hearted girl! [*Goes toward her, then starts back.*]

MISS M. What is it? [*Tries to restrain her laughter.*]

CAPTAIN. The marvellous likeness! I could fancy myself addressing Lucy herself—she spoke of a certain resemblance, but——

MISS M. What, Captain? Can the ideal and the real so blend into one? Can a woman “who, from the soles of her tortured feet to the highest frizzle of her hair, is false—false!” be like one who “has not forgotten the sweet weakness of blushing, who is simple in her tastes, modest in her dress!” Ha, ha! [*Laughs.*]

CAPTAIN. Kate—Lucy! What is this?

MISS M. [*Imitating his voice and manner.*] “You shall find, Miss Mowbray, that the rough officer is not so easily disposed of as you think! I will marry you—out of spite!” Do so, Cousin Jack! I consent, and promise not to torment you beyond endurance for sweetmeats—at least, not for those bought at the confectioners!

CAPTAIN. What, sweet cousin! has my secret wish come true? and may I, without fear of being tried for bigamy, marry Kate and Lucy both—in one?

MISS M. Indeed you may, on one condition, however: that you promise never again, with the usual presumption of your sex, to judge ours after mere

rough generalities. The letter in which you drew so flattering a fancy sketch of your future wife fell into my hands—how, I will not tell you—and I determined to show you that even in so worldly a creature as Kate Mowbray a something sweet and modest, which embodied was called Lucy Calton, might, with diligent search, be found. Ah, Cousin Jack! one of the most fruitful sources of unhappiness nowadays, is found in hasty and superficial judgments.

CAPTAIN. And am I forgiven? Yes, I see it in your eyes,—Lucy's own eyes! I can never call you by any but that dear old-fashioned name. Sweet cousin, need I tell you how grateful I am to be thus—weather-bound?

AN UNEXPECTED GUEST.

A Comedy in two Acts.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MRS. BROWN.

MATTIE BROWN, *her Daughter.*

NELLIE MARSTON, *an Orphan.*

HARRY BENTON, *known as MR. RICHARDS,*
a Drawing-Master.

ROBERT LIVINGSTON.

A SERVANT.

AN UNEXPECTED GUEST.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A boudoir in a country house near New York. HARRY BENTON at an easel, working at a large water-colour drawing of MATTIE BROWN, who is sitting in an attitude of studied negligence. MRS. BROWN looking at the drawing with an assumption of critical attention.

MRS. BROWN. Ye-es. It certainly is much advanced. Are you quite sure it will be ready for this evening, Mr. Richards? You know I count on having it hung in a conspicuous place. It shall be decorated—decorated, Mr. Richards! I have a brilliant idea—we will drape the large American flag about it; there will be a mixture of patriotism, which is fashionable just now, and love of the fine arts, in that, which will do us great credit.

HARRY. If I might venture to make an observa-

tion, Mrs. Brown, I should say that the bright red and blue of the flag, very effective in the right place, would rather kill my modest sketch: the eye would be——

MRS. BROWN. Nonsense, nonsense, Mr. Richards! You artists are full of whims. Beside, what right have you to dictate? It is not as though you were a real portrait painter with a studio, a lot of greasy colours, and a stiff woman all joints, grey cotton skin and very little clothing beside. Did I not employ you simply as drawing-master to Mattie, and is it not a piece of unexpected good luck to be commissioned to paint her portrait? In point of fact, it ought to be included in the price of the lessons, but instead of that I have agreed to pay you—to pay you a large sum, Mr. Richards—a very large sum, and to recommend you to my friends beside. Do you know that I have watched you narrowly, and I find that you are singularly economical with your colours. You leave the paper quite bare in some places——

HARRY. If you understood water-colour drawing, Mrs. Brown, you would know that——

MRS. BROWN. I know all about it, Mr. Richards, and I repeat that you are singularly sparing of your colours, considering the price you ask for the portrait. I took good care to inquire as to the cost of the

different colours, and I find that the most expensive are precisely those of which you are most sparing. No wonder you are afraid of the red and blue of the flag! Put more red and blue in the picture—more red and blue, sir, and then it need not fear the contrast!

HARRY. Ah, my dear madam! If I had only been thrown oftener in the society of persons of such remarkable perspicacity as yourself, I should not have fallen into the vulgar error of supposing you ignorant of the mysteries of our art. You behold in me a man confounded and convinced. A little longer, and you shall behold a sunset effect in the back ground of the deepest vermilion, and Miss Brown's dress, instead of this unmeaning neutral tint, shall be of the brightest blue, and—Mrs. Brown, I promise not to spare the colours!

MRS. BROWN. Well, well, that is as it should be! You are a clever young man, and I will push you. After all, I did well to employ you; I might have had more difficulty in bringing a real artist to reason.

HARRY. Undoubtedly you would.

MRS. BROWN. Do you intend—shall we have the pleasure of seeing you among our guests at the ball?

MATTIE. [*Haughtily.*] I have invited Mr. Richards,

and he has accepted. It is not likely that he, as an inmate of the house, should be excluded.

MRS. BROWN. [*Coughs.*] Hum! oh, of course. Delighted I am sure. What do you think of the present style of dress among our young men, eh, Mr. Richards? I mean of course the indispensable evening dress; the—ah-hum! swallow-tail coat of the finest cloth; the elaborate shirt front very much displayed; the—the et cæteras, in point of fact.

HARRY. What do I think of it? Well, not much, I own. A man's dress is of so little importance.

MRS. BROWN. I am not at all of your opinion; an ill-dressed man in a ball-room is an eye-sore!

HARRY. [*Meditatively.*] In olden times, our sex rivalled yours in the brilliancy, richness, and variety of garments. In my opinion it was a ridiculous contest, for dress in its thousand variations is intended to bring out and give value to the softness of the complexion, the brightness of the eyes, the exquisite outline of form; and, therefore, I think men showed their good sense in leaving the field to their fair rivals, and by the plainness and uniformity of their own clothes, giving relief to those soft tinted airy fabrics, to the ingenuity of fashioning, which are the rightful aids to beauty.

MRS. BROWN. I did not ask you for your theory on the subject!

HARRY. I beg your pardon! I thought——

MRS. BROWN. I asked you a plain question, and expected a plain answer. I am a clever woman, Mr. Richards, and a clever woman is not to be imposed upon.

HARRY. My dear madam——

MATTIE. Mother, I am sure everything is not in readiness.

MRS. BROWN. Yes, my love, I have given orders——

MATTIE. I know what giving orders means; nothing goes right unless one looks after it oneself.

MRS. BROWN. Quite right, dearest; but I told Nellie Marston that she must be up early and see to the details.

MATTIE. Nellie Marston indeed! It is not very likely that that provoking, insupportable girl would trouble herself much about preparations for a ball in which she is to take no part! Really, mother, for the sake of your much-prized reputation for cleverness, do not make another such blunder. That girl irritates me, and I will not have her about the house any longer. One cannot order her about like a servant, yet she has less right to board and lodging than my maid has.

MRS. BROWN. But, my sweet angel, remember the circumstances!

MATTIE. Am I likely to forget them? We came in by right of succession to a large fortune; we took possession of a fine country house, and found the fortune burdened, the house invaded, by a girl who is nobody, and whom, beside, I personally dislike. She thinks that because that old fool, Mr. Coutz, chose to bring her up like his daughter, that now he is dead, the comforts and conveniences of wealth are still to be hers! I will not suffer this state of things to continue.

MRS. BROWN. Well, of course it is annoying; still you know she costs us next to nothing. We have been in possession more than a year, and she has not had a cent from me that I know! It is true there is her food——But, Mattie, do you not think it would be well, my pet, to turn this little inconvenience to some advantage. It would sound well, for example, to allude lightly to the orphan left destitute, because her protector died without leaving a will, and who is treated like a sister by you, like a—hum!—like a daughter by me, eh?

MATTIE. I am no hypocrite. You see, mother, I make no pretence of being a clever woman.

MRS. BROWN. But, sweet one, just reflect! It is all very well to give way to the charming frankness of your nature before me, and even before Mr. Richards, who, I am sure, is discreet, but, really,

it may be carried too far. Do you know, I have been thinking of telling her to come to the ball——

MATTIE. I will not hear of it!

MRS. BROWN. She might wear a thick white dress too small for her; all white is sure to be unbecoming to her. Of course she would not dance.

MATTIE. Mother, I am sure those flowers Mr. Livingston sent me have not been put in the cool. Do go and see about it!

MRS. BROWN. Yes, my love, immediately. I should not wonder if Mr. Livingston rode up from town this morning; he said something about it last evening.

MATTIE. [*Impatiently.*] Yes, yes——I am sure my flowers are fading.

MRS. BROWN. I am going. [*Turns to go.*]

MATTIE. [*Watching her mother leave the room.*]
At last!

MRS. BROWN. [*Putting her head in at the door.*]
Do not sit too long, Mattie, Mr. Richards can put in the red and blue without you.

MATTIE. Very well. [*Exit MRS. BROWN.*] Mr. Richards——

MRS. BROWN. [*Reappearing.*] And, my love, think over what I said about Nellie Marston! [*Exit L.*]

SCENE II.

MATTIE BROWN and HARRY BENTON.

MATTIE. [*Rising.*] Are we to expect another interruption I wonder? [*Laughs.*] Poor mother! but she means well!

HARRY. She loves you.

MATTIE. Oh yes, no doubt; and beside, being, as she takes care to inform all, a clever woman, she wants to make use of me. She thinks that when I am the wife of a man of high position she will have the *entrée* to that higher society which she has never, despite her perseverance, been able to enter. Why do you look at me so? Perhaps you think, "like mother, like daughter?"

HARRY. I have no right to think about it; I can but look, feel, and admire.

MATTIE. And so—you really love me?

HARRY. In your mouth those simple words seem the bitterest satire. For the sake of that love, what would you sacrifice? Would you, to make me happy, give up one dear comfort, one useless extravagance? No, what you love is wealth, power. You love, best of all, to trample on the hearts of men; but as to any other sentiment——Confess it, your heart beats no

quicker for these words of mine; a smile of gratified vanity plays about your mouth, that is all! Do you think that I do not understand you, Mattie Brown?

MATTIE. [*Angrily.*] I hate my name, and you take pleasure in ringing the odious sound in my ears! Brown, Brown! why not Smith or Robinson, or Jones?

HARRY. You think that Livingston has a more pleasant sound.

MATTIE. Perhaps.

HARRY. You are coldly cruel. You will not loosen the bonds you have known so well how to rivet about me, yet you flaunt your worldliness in my face, you——

MATTIE. I am no hypocrite.

HARRY. No, but you are a flirt, and of the worst kind, too!——Why are you not angry with me? What right have I, your drawing-master, a man who is paid with your money, to address you so? I will tell you why you do not reprove me; it is because, in my very roughness, you see a sign of your power. What! could you not spare even me? Must my whole sex bow before you? Tell me, when you have changed that hated name of yours, when you are the proud and envied wife of Robert Livingston, must I hide my misery far from you?

will your lackeys have orders never to admit the man who calls himself Harry Richards, whose coat is threadbare, whose boots are patched?

MATTIE. Did the threadbare coat prevent me from acknowledging your merits?

HARRY. That is not answering me. I am not speaking of the past or even of the present, I am speaking of the future.

MATTIE. Why should I refuse to see you then, any more than now?

HARRY. But I warn you, it is not in my nature to hide what I feel—I shall speak to Mrs. Livingston as I now do to Mattie Brown.

MATTIE. So that I do not listen, what matters what you say? [*With a sudden change of manner.*] Harry, you do not love me, something tells me this. What is your aim in all this?

HARRY. [*Laughing.*] You would be astonished indeed if I were to confess it. There, now indeed you are angry with me. Shall I swear my love at your feet? You warned me to be cautious lest Livingston should take offence, and now I sincerely believe that you are more than half angry that I should obey so well.

MATTIE. You are insupportable!

HARRY. Which means, young lady, that if you thought me escaping from your thralldom, you would

think no witcheries too powerful, no words too sweet, to win back the truant—drawing-master!

MATTIE. You do not talk like a drawing-master, you do not look like one. Who, and what are you?

HARRY. Did not your mother write to Mrs. Sydney for such a person as myself—an artist, without sufficient talent to assume his rightful place in society—a dauber, fit to guide the first efforts of little girls, or at best to give the finishing touches to Miss Brown's sketches from nature? Did I not appear duly armed with a letter of recommendation? How long is it since I arrived? Three weeks—time enough to go through all the phases of a modern flirtation; an innocent flirtation, as it is called in the jargon of your circle. What is there extraordinary in all this? Why do you think to find in me a disguised prince?

MATTIE. You puzzle me.

HARRY. I know I do, and in that lies my power. But for that, Miss Brown, you would not have listened to me any longer than you would have listened to the rhapsodies of John, the butler.

MATTIE. [*Coquettishly.*] So we have decided that point: you no longer love me?

HARRY. [*Kneeling.*] I adore you as much as ever.

SCENE III.

Enter NELLIE, slightly out of breath, with a small parcel in her hand, from R.

NELLIE. [*Stopping short.*] Oh! I did not know you were sitting for—your portrait.

MATTIE. [*Angrily.*] How dare you play the spy! You have no right to enter these rooms.

NELLIE. No right to enter these rooms, where I played as a child, where I studied as a girl, where I was caressed and loved!—no right!

MATTIE. I repeat it, no right. Oh, it is plain to see how that old man loved you, since he made no provision for you. You were a toy with which he amused his second childhood, that is all!

NELLIE. Cruel! you may say what you like to me, but you shall not speak ill of him. He loved me dearly, and always meant to leave me well provided for, that you know as well as I.

MATTIE. Why did he not do it then?

NELLIE. Because the thought of making a will was distressing to him, as it is to many old people, and he put it off till it was too late. Beside, he never could be persuaded that the rightful heir, his nephew, was dead—and Mr. Benton would not have taken everything from me, I know!

MATTIE. That is a good joke! [*Laughs.*] You shared in the hallucination, I suppose. You thought that this young man who, as has been amply proved, perished in that fight with the Indians eighteen months ago, would come back, all beard and scars, dispossess the intruders, and marry you as a finale! Really, my dear, you have read too many novels.

NELLIE. Sneer as you will, I do not believe that he is dead.

MATTIE. This is too much! But I am wasting my time, talking to one like you. Did you not get my mother's orders? Why are you not at work? One would think your pride would induce you to do something to earn the bread you eat. Do you not know that you are kept on charity, that you are a beggar?

NELLIE. As to that, Miss Brown, you shall not long be able to taunt me with my dependence. The solitude to which I have, for so many months, been condemned, has not been without its fruit. I have studied early and late to fit myself to earn my bread, for yours chokes me!—I expect to leave in a few days, and enter a family as governess. But in the meantime I will not be treated like a servant!

MATTIE. Pray, if I might be so indiscreet as to ask, what family has secured your inestimable services?

NELLIE. I am engaged by Mrs. Grenville, Mr. Livingston's eldest sister.

MATTIE. By Mrs. Grenville! But how—I presume that when you are domesticated with that lady, who hates me, you will give your version——

NELLIE. As to that, though I am no gossip, I do not feel myself bound to silence by any ties of gratitude. By the way, your anger at my sudden entrance may perhaps be mitigated when I tell you that I saw Mr. Livingston riding up the avenue. Shall I go and tell him that you are engaged, and cannot receive him?

MATTIE. Come, Nellie, you must not take my frankness of manner so ill. You know I am the most outspoken of creatures. You are flushed after your walk, for I conclude that you have just returned from a walk, and really a little colour is very becoming to you. Would you like to look on at the ball this evening? I was saying to mother just now, that you might enjoy it. You know you are too young to go much into society, that is the only reason we do not take you out with us. There! I can arrange all very nicely; you can have one of my old dresses, and with those clever fingers of yours you can make it quite becoming, I am sure. As to your plan of going out as a governess, my dear, of course that is quite out of the question; you

are one of us. Now, you must not bear malice for a few cross words, must she, Mr. Richards?

SCENE IV.

Enter ROBERT LIVINGSTON, *riding-whip in hand,*
from R.

ROBERT. Good morning, good morning! Miss Mattie, your most devoted. Ah, Miss Marston, I am fortunate in seeing you before forgetting my commission; I have the worst memory! Here is a letter from my sister, and she bids me say that you must not refuse. [*Gives a letter.*] Ah, Richards! how go the arts? Finished the portrait?

HARRY. Miss Brown gave me her last sitting this morning, and now I believe my poor sketch waits only your sentence, to be—hung.

ROBERT. Ha, ha! very good; my sentence! My dear fellow, I will let you into a secret: to me one picture is precisely like another. If I had been the intimate friend of Rubens or Van Dyck, or any of those old chaps, I should undoubtedly have said to them something very like what I say to our artists here in New York. My dear fellow, you tell me that this is the best thing you have turned out; I believe it firmly—I have an unlimited stock of

blind faith ; true, it seems to me the very counterpart of Smith's best thing, and of Jones' last success ; still I will believe anything you choose to tell me. What is more, I will bully Stuart or Astor into buying this picture, and swear by all my gods that it is—what d'ye call it?—a chef-d'œuvre. Ha ! ha !

MATTIE. You can at least say whether you think my portrait flattered.

ROBERT. Flattered ! I should like to see the portrait that dared to think itself handsomer than you ! Flattered indeed ! not a bit—not a bit ! Here, Richards, could you not give a little more flash to those eyes ? What eyes, eh !—it is worth while to be a dauber for the sake of looking at them. [*Aside, while MATTIE turns round and looks at herself in the mirror.*] You dog ! you have made them twice as large as nature.

HARRY. I presume, Miss Brown, that we may then consider our work finished. And what about the flag ?

MATTIE. Never mind mother's nonsense ; follow your own ideas, of course ; I will give all the necessary orders.

ROBERT. [*Reflectively.*] Ours is a great country, of that we can have no doubt ; all the Fourth of July orators shout the fact at us. We are beyond the slavery of prejudices ; we carry our independence

into the bosom of our families. The sons and daughters supplant the parents——

MATTIE. What do you mean?

ROBERT. What do I mean? nothing particular—I never do; but I think of delivering a lecture on the march of civilization before an admiring audience of emancipated boys and girls, and for an orator there is nothing so good as frequent practice. Come, do not be angry with a fellow; the lightning of those superb eyes has almost made me forget my real object for coming up this morning. Come out for a little ride; you will not be up to the exertions of this evening unless you take a canter on Puck. Put on your habit and let us start before the sun gets too high.

MATTIE. Very well, I will be magnanimous; but before we start I want you to give me the benefit of your sage opinion on the arrangement of the conservatory.

ROBERT. My well-known taste is at your service, like all my other faculties, talents, and perceptions. Order, and I will obey.

[*Exeunt, L.*]

SCENE V.

HARRY *still standing by the easel, looks furtively toward*
NELLIE, *who pretends to be absorbed in her letter.*

HARRY. Is your letter as interesting as it is long?

NELLIE. Yes.

HARRY. May I read it?

NELLIE. No.

HARRY. Hard-hearted girl!—at least give me some idea of what it is about.

NELLIE. Mrs. Grenville wishes me to go to her at once, this very day, and I—I mean to——

HARRY. To refuse, of course.

NELLIE. No, I shall go.

HARRY. Sit down, Miss Nellie, and let us talk this matter over quietly. [*Offers her a chair.*]

NELLIE. No, I will not talk it over.

HARRY. Why not? Pray sit down, pray do.

NELLIE. [*Irresolutely.*] Why should I?

HARRY. Because I have a decided objection to standing myself, and unless you sit how can I? Selfishness, you see, nothing but selfishness! [*She sits.*] That is right; now smile; that severe look is not half as becoming as your ordinary expression.

NELLIE. I cannot smile.

HARRY. Why not?

NELLIE. Because—because I want to cry!

HARRY. Tell me the cause of your sadness and let me console you.

NELLIE. Oh, no, no, no!

HARRY. Well, then, let us pass to another subject. Do you know I am devoured with curiosity—please do me the favour to ask what has excited that unmanly sentiment!

NELLIE. What has excited it?

HARRY. I want to know the contents of that little white parcel that hides itself so coyly in your hand. May I open it?

NELLIE. No.

HARRY. Why, you are full of mysteries this morning! I caught a glimpse of you, running down the green lane back of the house, quite early this morning,—where were you going?

NELLIE. I was hurrying to catch the first train to town.

HARRY. To town! Going to town is a rare occurrence to you, is it not? And pray is there no connection between the trip to town and this tempting mischievous, tantalizing, white parcel?

NELLIE. Perhaps.

HARRY. Now confess; it is some bright-coloured ribbon, or some dainty bit of lace, wherewith you mean to adorn yourself this evening.

NELLIE. It is something for this evening, but it is not for me.

HARRY. For whom then is it?

NELLIE. I will not tell you—now!

HARRY. What a volume of reproaches is contained in that “now.” You are angry with me?

NELLIE. A little.

HARRY. Because you overheard my words to Mattie Brown. Do you remember what they were?

NELLIE. Oh, yes! you said: I adore you as much as ever.

HARRY. Well; I only said the truth.

NELLIE. Ah, I knew how it would be! But are you blind? Do you not know that she is only playing with the heart which you throw at her feet? Do you not know that she would not hesitate to trample on it, if the object she proposed to herself happened to be beyond? Are you mad enough to think that she would marry you? Ah, you do not know how bitter it is to love, and to feel that love unrequited!

HARRY. But why do you think that she would refuse to marry me?

NELLIE. What have you to offer her?

HARRY. Is not the love of an honest heart something?

NELLIE. Oh, yes, it is something—it is everything, but not to one like Mattie Brown!

HARRY. Well, I shall try and bear my sad fate with philosophy. I will tell you a secret, Miss Nellie, may I? Listen: the day on which she gives her hand to Mr. Livingston I shall be as quiet as I am now; I shall not envy him.

NELLIE. But——

HARRY. But—well, little questioner, what is it? When I said that I adored her now as much as ever, I meant that I had always been tolerably indifferent to her fascinations.

NELLIE. Then how wicked of you to——

HARRY. Not at all. Had I discovered the slightest particle of genuine feeling in the flirtation with which she has honoured me, I should have desisted at once; but the only sentiment over which I have any power is vanity. I need not tell you that to wound that is, in my eyes, no crime.

NELLIE. But what object can you have in view?

HARRY. What if I were to tell you that I am writing a novel—everybody does write novels nowadays—and that being in want of just such a character as hers, I came here to study from the life. Now, may I open the parcel?

NELLIE. No, not yet. I feel half ashamed of what I have done.

HARRY. Then let me share the shame. Have you been committing some petty theft, eh?

NELLIE. One moment. You know when Miss Brown told you that you were to appear at the ball, you confessed that you had none of those indispensable trifles necessary for these occasions, but I saw by your expression that you wanted to be present. Oh, then I felt how bitter it was to be poor! I thought how you must suffer, you, so superior to all around you, and yet kept down, humiliated by the want of a little money! So——

HARRY. Well, what after?

NELLIE. I dare not tell the rest; you will laugh at me.

HARRY. Laugh at you? Why, child, I think there is something not unlike tears in these eyes, that have been dry many years.

NELLIE. It is such a silly little thing to have done! and yet I felt myself capable of great sacrifices, as these thoughts came to my mind. When I was safe in my room, I tried to remember what trifles gentlemen considered indispensable, and all I could think of was—white kid gloves and a white cravat, and—here they are! You see, the poor feel for the poor!

HARRY. And so, it was to buy these that you took the early train to town?

NELLIE. Yes.

HARRY. And where did you find the money?

NELLIE. I had a very few dollars left in the purse Mr. Coutz gave me two years ago. It was just enough.

HARRY. And now, you have nothing left?

NELLIE. Nothing. But I mean to earn ever so much money as governess, and put by a little every year. Oh, I shall be so economical!

HARRY. I do not thank you, Nellie, for thanks are superfluous between us, are they not?

NELLIE. No, do not thank me. Come, let me see if they are the right number; I had to guess. [*Measures the gloves.*] Ye-es, I think they will do. Only be careful when you put them on, kid gloves are treacherous things; they go—crack! when you least expect it.

HARRY. I am going to exact a promise from you.

NELLIE. Yes?

HARRY. You must appear at this ball, also. Did you not hear Miss Brown invite you?

NELLIE. [*Laughing.*] Yes—but you see it would require something beside white gloves and a white cravat to make me presentable.

HARRY. Perhaps I am telling secrets, but I am certain I saw a cloud of something white and pink carried to your room; of course, I am as ignorant

as most men would be, as to the nature of the white and pink cloud, but, somehow, the idea penetrated my thick head that it was a ball dress.

NELLIE. Really—really!

HARRY. I feel more and more convinced that it was a ball dress. You like to dance, do you not?

NELLIE. Oh, so much!

HARRY. Then I engage you for the first waltz, and for each and all of the succeeding dances, whatever may be their nature or length.

NELLIE. How nice! But I am afraid I have forgotten how to dance.

HARRY. Suppose we try. There is no time like the present. [*Whistles a waltz and they dance.*]

SCENE VI.

Enter ROBERT LIVINGSTON *from* L.

ROBERT. Hey, what? — halloa! don't upset a fellow!

NELLIE. [*Out of breath.*] Oh!—I beg pardon! [*Runs away, R.*]

ROBERT. I say, Richards—that is a jolly way of cultivating the fine arts!

HARRY. Miss Marston thought she had forgotten

how to dance, and I have proved to her that she has not; that is all.

ROBERT. Not a bad idea. I wonder if she would not accept me as her dancing-master, number two. Miss Marston!—no answer. Well then, I will pursue my original intention.

HARRY. Which was, I believe, to ride out with Miss Brown.

ROBERT. Exactly; she is even now changing her dress; and while waiting for her I thought I would come and have a chat with you.

HARRY. Too much honour!

ROBERT. Come, come, no humbug, that's a good fellow! Let us have things square. You know you are a poor devil of an artist——

HARRY. I aspire to that eminence at least.

ROBERT. Without a dollar to cross yourself with——

HARRY. Pardon me; I have just two and a quarter, which are quite at your service, if, according to custom, you should wish to borrow.

ROBERT. Ha! ha! very good. 'Pon my word though, if I were not the most good-natured fellow in the world, I might take offence. But, Richards, I have taken a liking to you, even though you do chaff me, and flirt with my beautiful Mattie in a shamefully open way—but then, flirting is in

fashion, and one must follow the fashion, or—or be hanged. Now, listen, I have some influence, I will get you pupils, portraits, anything you like, if you will only help me.

HARRY. Do you wish me to make serious love for you?

ROBERT. No, confound it! I can do that for myself. But now, seriously, have you heard no ugly reports?

HARRY. Yes, I saw by the newspaper this morning, that the constitution of the country was in danger.

ROBERT. There, you are chaffing again. This is serious, man, devilish serious! It is whispered that Harry Benton, the dead heir, has come to life again.

HARRY. Indeed! I wonder which of the two states of existence he prefers.

ROBERT. Will you listen, this is no joke! It seems that an old servant of the family saw a man whom he swears is Benton.

HARRY. I do not see how that can be; all the old servants were dismissed when Mrs. Brown and her daughter took possession. Beside, I understood that Benton was a mere lad when he left home; he must be greatly changed, if, indeed, which seems scarcely probable, he is still alive.

ROBERT. The old chap lives in the village hard

by, and is telling the story right and left. You see, if there were anything in it, it would make a dooced difference.

HARRY. Precisely. Miss Brown, instead of being immensely rich, would have but a very modest fortune. But then to a man as much in love as you——

ROBERT. Oh, hang sentiment! When one flirts every day of one's life, and nearly always with a different woman, love is rather out of the question. Mattie is a fine-looking girl, and her fortune would have been invaluable to me just now. I have got myself into some nasty money difficulties.

HARRY. Are you engaged to her?

ROBERT. Not a bit. Her game was to keep herself free in case anything better offered, and—so was mine. When she received that letter from Sallie Brand, who married the Italian duke, she was all for a trip to Europe; but lately, I rather think she has come to the conclusion that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.

HARRY. Your prospects for matrimonial bliss, should you after all marry, seem to me most entrancing.

ROBERT. What will you? As our French friends say, the world is like that. So, decidedly, you can give me no news of the resuscitated heir?

HARRY. Hush! here comes Mrs. Brown, who would not, I fancy, enjoy taking part in such a conversation.

SCENE VII.

Enter MRS. BROWN from L.

MRS. BROWN. Oh, Mr. Livingston, Mr. Livingston! Ah, here you are! I have been sending servants all over the garden for you. Criticising our portrait, are you? Well, you must now go from it to the original—Mattie is waiting for you; and, mind you, do not fatigue the darling child. If she does not look her very best this evening, I shall never forgive you, never!

ROBERT. Trust me, madam!—I fly on the wings of love. And oh! Mrs. Brown, if you care for me, remember what I said about the lobster salad; it is of the most vital importance! [*Exit.*]

MRS. BROWN. Ah, Mr. Richards, Mr. Richards! you have not put in the red and blue! I insist upon it, sir,—I insist upon it!

Curtain falls.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

The boudoir decorated with flowers and brilliantly lighted. Enter MRS. BROWN from R. in full evening dress, agitated.

MRS. BROWN. [*Sinking in a chair and fanning herself violently.*] It has given me such a turn—la, la! An anonymous letter mysteriously slipped into one's hand by—dear knows whom——“You will receive this evening an unexpected guest,”—and nothing more! What am I to make of it? One's idea of anonymous letters are connected with—with lovers;—well, and why not, I should like to know? An unexpected guest, why that means—I wonder if it would be that rich old bachelor, Mr. Danby, who sits next to me at church—ha! ha! Would not Mattie stare if I were to give her a papa-in-law! She might object; I must hurry her marriage. She would laugh——Children have no reverence nowadays! [*Gets up and looks at herself in the mirror.*] Hum! not so bad. A widow, rich and good looking—yes, decidedly good-looking; a trifle stout, perhaps, but men hate thin women! [*Walking up*

and down, still looking at herself.] Majesty of deportment—for that I am celebrated! For my part, I should not see anything to laugh at if Mr. Danby did admire me. No one would give me a day over forty! Forty, a charming age; the fire of youth a little subdued, perhaps; maturity of thought—I am a clever woman, no one disputes that; maturity of—of beauty, general loftiness, and dignity of manner—For my part I do not understand the infatuation of men for mere girls—unformed chits! Decidedly, the note comes from Mr. Danby; he would be an unexpected guest, of course, since we sent him no invitation. It is an eccentric way of avowing his flame, to present himself unasked at a ball, in a strange house. But the plan bears the mark of originality, and originality is so refreshing in these days of dull, common, good sense.

SCENE II.

Enter ROBERT LIVINGSTON *and* MATTIE BROWN
from R.

ROBERT. [*Clapping his hands.*] Beautiful, splendid, stunning!

MATTIE. Why, mother, you are armed for conquest, I see!

MRS. BROWN. And why not, pray? You girls

think that youth is everything. Mr. Livingston, is it very visible?—I mean that mole on my cheek—some people think a mole is an improvement.

ROBERT. I for one do. Permit me to compliment you on your appearance, you are magnificent!

MRS. BROWN. He; he! Do you really think so? I always thought you a man of taste, Mr. Livingston. Dear me, how late it is getting! In an hour our guests will be coming; I must see if the ball-room is in order. [Exit L.]

SCENE III.

ROBERT LIVINGSTON *and* MATTIE BROWN.

MATTIE. [*Impatiently pulling a flower to pieces.*] Do you think I told you to come early in order to give myself the pleasure of seeing you take your ease in that arm-chair, while you study the ornaments of the ceiling?

ROBERT. No; I fancied, Miss Brown, that you had some object in ordering my presence; but I am a patient man. I am waiting.

MATTIE. But I am not a patient woman.

ROBERT. [*Laughing.*] No; I am aware of the fact.

MATTIE. Come, Robert Livingston, it is thought

that I carry my frankness too far. However that may be, I cannot change my nature; I must speak as the impulse of the moment directs. What induced you to put those questions to me this morning?

ROBERT. About the dead heir?

MATTIE. Yes; about Harry Benton.

ROBERT. Because I am told his ghost walks the earth. I do not believe in ghosts. Do you?

MATTIE. Mr. Livingston, are we engaged, can you tell me?

ROBERT. That is a question I meant to put to yourself. 'Pon my honour, I do not know.

MATTIE. Our acquaintances have settled that for us. They say we are.

ROBERT. My dear Miss Mattie, let me put a case to you. Suppose this evening, for example, a prince, duke, or count, with undoubted right to his title, were to aspire to the honour of your hand, would you consider yourself engaged to me?

MATTIE. No.

ROBERT. Charming frankness! which deserves corresponding frankness on my part.

MATTIE. Which means that if Harry Benton made his appearance, instead of the foreign prince, you, on your side, would consider yourself free?

ROBERT. I fear that in that case my doctor would

order immediate change of air. My health, you know, is very delicate.

MATTIE. [*After a pause bursts into a fit of laughter.*] Ha, ha! Do you know that this is a very original love scene?

ROBERT. We live in an original age, my dear Miss Brown.

MATTIE. Very. [*Angrily.*] Do you know, sir, that if I had a brother, you would not dare to act so to me?

ROBERT. You are mistaken. If you had twenty brothers I should consider myself justified in doing so. Let us understand each other. Thanks to your delightful openness of character, my vanity, overweening as it may be, has not been monstrous enough to make me fancy that you loved anything in me beside the position and name which I was able to offer you.

MATTIE. Is that a reason for boasting of your own perfect indifference to me? The cases are scarcely parallel. You sought me, therefore I was justified in thinking you cared for me.

ROBERT. Perhaps I did, at first. I admire you still; and should we, in the end, marry, I have every intention of making you a good husband.

MATTIE. You are too kind.

ROBERT. Not at all. But listen. I hear the

rustle of a dress. Probably Mrs. Brown has finished the inspection of the ball-room. If we wish to finish this very interesting conversation, let us take refuge in the conservatory; there we shall not be disturbed.

[*Exeunt* L.]

SCENE IV.

Enter NELLIE, *from* R., *prettily dressed, cautiously peeping.*

NELLIE. My room is so small that I could not see the effect; and then I have no glass larger than my hand. [*Looking round at her dress, and clapping her hands.*] How pretty! [*Walks about.*] I feel quite like a princess in a fairy tale. Everything is so complete, even to the ornaments. I wonder if the bracelets are real gold. Who could have sent all these lovely things? That is what I have been saying all day long—who? Not Mrs Brown, not Mattie, of that I feel sure. Could it have been Mrs. Grenville? Scarcely, unless she wanted to turn her governess's head. Then who, who? What is the use of worrying? I am so happy! so ridiculously happy! It is quite useless for me to repeat to myself, "Silly Nellie! Foolish child! To-morrow all this glory will have vanished, and you must return to your ashes and chimney corner, like a poor little

Cinderella that you are!" It has no effect; I am so happy, so very happy! How long Mr. Richards takes to dress! I thought perhaps he would be down before me. I wonder—I wonder if he will think I look well. I am not pretty—oh no! [*Peeps in the mirror.*] And yet not quite plain either. Perhaps he might think me almost pretty. I wonder if he would. He once said he would rather look into my eyes than into those of the greatest beauty living. I wonder why? Perhaps he saw in them his own image. How foolish of me! And yet that day I wore my ugliest dress, and my hair was all rumpled. [*Peeps again.*] I am prettier to-night. Oh, decidedly prettier. I remember that day so well! He was sketching in the wood—he was quite alone. Perhaps he knew that I always took my walk in the wood. How handsome he looked! I think he is the finest-looking man I ever saw. But he does flirt with Mattie Brown. How can he, I wonder? He must see that she has no heart. Oh, here he comes. I know his step so well!

SCENE V.

Enter HARRY BENTON, from R. NELLIE stands with her back to him.

HARRY. [*Not recognising her.*] I beg your pardon. I was not aware that the guests——

NELLIE. [*Turning round and laughing merrily, makes a profound curtsy.*] Good evening, Mr. Richards.

HARRY. Nellie!—I mean Miss Marston—for indeed I feel awed by so much grandeur. Why, little girl, it is no wonder I did not know you, transformed as you are into a fashionable woman. You will not look at the poor drawing-master now.

NELLIE. Yes I will look at him though, and tell him that the white gloves and cravat have a marvellous effect; they actually give an air of latest fashion to the dress-coat. [*Examines him critically.*]

HARRY. They possess a magic power, those same trifles, Miss Nellie. I will never part with them; they shall be the talisman of my life.

NELLIE. Even when the gloves are in holes, and the cravat limp and rumpled?

HARRY. Even then; for the sentiment which gave them their value will always be fresh and beautiful. Let us make ourselves comfortable; we have some

time before us, and I want to have a little serious talk with you.

NELLIE. Serious talk? Must it be very serious? I feel this evening as though I did not wish anything sad to come between me and the joyous, happy feeling which has taken possession of me.

HARRY. I said serious, not sad. You see, Nellie, we must not let our fine clothes make us forget that we both of us belong to the workers of the world.

NELLIE. Please let us forget it just a little while.

HARRY. What! All these pretty trivialities make you happy? You rejoice in the flowers, in the lights, in your gossamer dress, in these bracelets? The music that soon will fill these rooms will make your heart bound with pleasure?

NELLIE. Yes. I cannot help it. There has been so little gaiety in my life. You do not blame me?

HARRY. No; though to find you in this frame of mind rather disturbs my plans, for I wanted to ask some serious advice of this wise little head. Confess now, for the sake of securing all these luxuries you would give up a great deal.

NELLIE. Yes, I would. I know that it is very foolish in one situated as I am: but sometimes I cannot help longing to be surrounded always with lovely things; to have my rooms decorated with beautiful objects of art; to be able to walk in my

own conservatory, and admire with languid happiness the exquisite shape and colour of the flowers; to inhale their perfume. I should like not to have to think of the hard, practical things of this life; not to have to say, I dare not allow myself this pleasure, for it will cost money. I should like, when I see misery and want about me, to be able to give relief. It seems to me that the thanks of the poor and aged must be the sweetest music on earth. I should like—in one word, I should like, oh, so much! to be rich.

HARRY. Indeed! And to obtain this you would, as you just confessed, give up much. Let me put a case. Suppose your heart had spoken; suppose that, half unconsciously to yourself, it had chosen its mate, and that the man to whom you would willingly trust your happiness did not have it in his power to offer you those luxuries and comforts which you, woman-like, crave. Suppose also, for a moment, that by turning from him, by giving yourself, with all your treasure of youth, of innocence, of fresh beauty, to another, you could obtain riches—almost unlimited wealth—which of the two would you choose? Do not answer hastily, child; be truthful, simply truthful.

NELLIE. Yes; I will be truthful. And yet I scarcely know what to say; all these things are half-

veiled to me. But listen. If—if, indeed, I were—loved, do you think that there would be room in my heart or my mind for other thoughts? The treasure of perfect sympathy, of simple trust, faith, and entire love, is, must be, a treasure so far exceeding the vulgar one of riches, that no possible comparison could exist between the two. Have you never stood and watched the heavy clouds toward evening, how grey and dark they seem, then suddenly, as the sun breaks from them, and slowly sets in the west, how these same clouds become transfigured into beauty; how the cold, grey tones become gold, and crimson, and violet? Yet they are, in reality, not changed: they are the same, only by the power of the glorious sun they are transfigured into a beauty of which a calm, cloudless sky could not boast. So I think it must be with love. The ordinary cares of life, even its anxieties, its sorrows, become glorified and made beautiful. Oh! who could willingly throw away such a treasure?

HARRY. Yet we must not undervalue the charms of a life made easy and delightful by that other magician—gold.

NELLIE. I do not undervalue its charms. With my kind protector, Mr. Coutz, I tasted the pleasure of riches; and since the time when I found myself destitute, I have perhaps been apt in my hours of

sadness, to think too much of what I have lost. And now that I find myself upon the eve of entering upon a career of hard work, now that all prospect of ease and comfort seems further from me than ever, I feel a cowardly shrinking and fear——

HARRY. And yet if you were put to that proof of which I was speaking, you would not hesitate?

NELLIE. I would not hesitate.

HARRY. Nellie, would you even share the fortunes of an unknown drawing-master?

NELLIE. [*Agitated.*] What do you mean?

HARRY. Child, this drawing-master has so little to offer you! An honest heart full of love and confidence, a strong determination to conquer fortune for your sake—and that is all. You do not answer—you turn from me—is it in maiden bashfulness or in contempt?—answer Nellie, for a man bears with difficulty such suspense as this——

NELLIE. [*After a pause, turning suddenly toward him.*] O Harry, I love you so much!

HARRY. What! enough to abandon all thoughts of gaiety, of luxury; enough to lay aside with this pretty dress all thoughts of seeing yourself the belle of a ball-room, the pet of society; enough to resume with pleasure, with pride even, your simple working-dress and say, "For Harry's sake?"

NELLIE. Yes, yes!

HARRY. Enough even to wait perhaps for years, until the delicate freshness of your youth fades under the tyranny of years and hard work; until the natural sunniness of temper in both of us has been embittered by disappointments and hope long deferred? Ah, Nellie, you are promising too much!—but it is still time to retract. With a little patience, you are sure to attract one of the fortunate ones of the earth, one by whom I should appear poor indeed, and the lot I offer—unbearable.

NELLIE. Hush! do not talk so; it hurts me.

HARRY. Well then—say after me: Harry, I love you.

NELLIE. Harry I love you. Are you satisfied, tyrant? Remember your own words, sir: we are of the workers of the world, we must not waste our precious time in—in nonsense. We have our plans to form.

HARRY. Yes indeed, we have our plans to form. Did I not say yours was a wise little head?

NELLIE. To-morrow I leave here, and you must leave too.

HARRY. Why?

NELLIE. Because now you must not flirt any more. Remember what I saw this morning——

HARRY. Dear, dear! I had quite forgotten that little episode; and now that I reflect on it, I find

that I have omitted the usual ceremony of kneeling—shall I repair my fault?

NELLIE. No, no, do not kneel! Nature made you taller than me—Nature intended me to look up at you, not to look down upon you, Harry; I would rather follow Nature's law than that of the strong minded female revolutionists of the day.

HARRY. Why, Nellie, you spurn the march of progress, I see. Well I, for my part, would rather see you strong hearted, dear, than strong minded. I too am well satisfied with the decrees of Nature, for I know nothing sweeter than looking down into upturned eyes, and there reading—what I now read.

SCENE VI.

*Enter MRS. BROWN, MATTIE, and following them
ROBERT LIVINGSTON, from L.*

MRS. BROWN. [*excited.*] What is this I hear? Nellie Marston! Yes, it is true! Look at her, all of you. This daintily dressed young lady is the orphan who is fed with my charity—who, but for me, would be in the streets. Look at her, I say!

ROBERT. 'Pon my word, I for one am quite willing to look at her—wonderfully becoming, Miss Marston—point of fact, quite stunning!

MATTIE. [*Disdainfully.*] You have adopted the best way of fitting yourself for—service. I congratulate your sister, Mr. Livingston, on her newly-found treasure.

MRS. BROWN. Can you not speak girl? How did you get this finery?—you scarcely came by it honestly, I should say—bracelets too, upon my word!

MATTIE. As to that, I think I can explain. Miss Marston went in secret to town, early this morning; doubtless it was to meet her generous—lover, protector, or whatever else the gentleman may be termed, and he, out of gratitude for this kindness, spent a certain sum in gratifying the vanity, which is always a prominent trait of creatures like herself. —[*Nellie bursts into tears.*]

HARRY. Miss Brown!

MATTIE. So you take up her defence, do you? It strikes me we disturbed a very touching tête-à-tête. You are right, it would be selfish in one man to appropriate such beauty as hers, to the exclusion of other lovers.

HARRY. Do you know that you are insulting my affianced bride?

MATTIE. [*Laughing.*] Bride indeed! It was by way of practice, I suppose, that you this morning——

HARRY. Take care, or I will repeat our conversa-

tion in all its details for the benefit of the assembled company.

MATTIE. How chivalrous—how full of honour!

HARRY. I am chivalrous to all women who deserve to be treated with chivalry. You wish to know, madam, [*turns to Mrs. Brown,*] how Miss Marston came into the possession of this dress and these ornaments. They are a present from me, from her future husband. Surely she is justified in accepting such gifts?

MRS. BROWN. } From you?

MATTIE. } What do you mean?

NELLIE. Oh, Harry, what an extravagance!

ROBERT. Why, Richards, you seem flush—you could not accommodate a fellow with the loan of a couple of thousands, could you?

MATTIE. The morning visit to town remains unexplained, at any rate.

HARRY. Pardon me. I am in the secret of that same expedition, and perfectly approve of it; which, under the circumstances, I fancy, suffices.

MRS. BROWN. But this is all nonsense; you have not enough between you to buy the wedding ring.

HARRY. We can have one of those offending bracelets melted down for the purpose. Beside, Nellie and I have concluded that we love each other well enough to work and wait. You will understand

that after what has passed, we neither of us can consent to be among your guests this evening. Nellie, I will call a carriage to take you at once to Mrs. Grenville's. [Exit, R.]

SCENE VII.

MRS. BROWN, MATTIE, NELLIE, ROBERT LIVINGSTON.

MATTIE. [*To NELLIE.*] No, you [shall not go until you have listened to me. This whole story is false; I do not believe one word of it.

NELLIE. Let me go—let me go!

MATTIE. You are a worthless creature, and you shall never marry Harry Richards; do you hear, never, never!

NELLIE. But what can that be to you? You do not love him, since you mean to marry Mr. Livingston.

ROBERT. Well put, Miss Marston, by Jove! I think it is about time for me to assert my rights.

MATTIE. Love him—love a drawing-master! You must be out of your senses.

NELLIE. Then why did you let him kneel to you?

ROBERT. Hilloa! what is that?

MATTIE. Because I chose to have him at my feet, literally and figuratively. But I suppose you

thought you had a right to my cast-off lovers as well as to my cast-off clothes.

NELLIE. Mrs. Brown, I apply to you—tell her to let me go.

ROBERT. It is my place to interfere. Miss Marston, take my arm and permit me to serve you as escort. Mattie, we have had enough bullying for once.

SERVANT. [*Announcing.*] Mr. Henry Benton!

ALL. What!

SERVANT. [*Louder.*] Mr. Henry Benton!

SCENE VIII.

Enter HARRY from R.

MRS. BROWN. [*Screams and falls on a chair.*] Is this my unexpected guest!

MATTIE. Mr. Richards!

NELLIE. Oh, Harry! what does this mean?

HARRY. It means, that Harry Benton, reported as dead eighteen months ago, survived the wounds received in a fight with the Indians, and taken prisoner by a tribe hostile to those by whom he and his party had been attacked, was adopted and cared for by them. It was only by stratagem, however, that he was enabled, after many months, to escape from the species of friendly captivity in which he

was held. On his return home, he found his uncle dead, his inheritance taken possession of by two—ladies; being by nature and education averse to opposing the fair sex, he endeavoured to find an amicable solution to the difficulty; for once the most romantic seemed to be also the most practical. Do you follow the story, Miss Brown?

MATTIE. I might have known it—Mr. Benton, even as the drawing-master, I——

HARRY. You deigned to flirt with me, as, since you were fifteen, you have deigned to flirt with every man of respectable exterior whom you have met. It was a rare chance which threw me into relations with Richards, the real drawing-master; for your appearance, I own it Miss Brown, impressed me strongly; but through the poor man's eyes I learnt to know you well, and also to know Nellie Marston, my uncle's adopted child, and—my own bride.

MATTIE. This is infamous!

MRS. BROWN. But do you think, sir, that a clever woman like me is to be imposed upon by such a story? I will go to law.

HARRY. I would scarcely advise it. You would only endanger the modest fortune which is left to you.

MATTIE. Mr. Livingston, are you a man, and do you stand there to see me insulted?

ROBERT. [*Coughing.*] Oh! I feel a return of my old complaint, the doctor orders change of air in such a case.

MATTIE. I will be revenged yet! [*Exit, L.*]

NELLIE. Oh, Harry!

HARRY. Well, and do you regret the life of hardship and patience which I sketched out for you, sweetheart?

NELLIE. Almost; for then I should have been able to prove—what I can now only feel.

SERVANT. Madam, the ball-room is filling, and there is no one to receive the guests.

MRS. BROWN. Oh dear! oh dear! what an embarrassing position, even for a clever woman!

HARRY. Come, Mrs. Brown, let us arrange this amicably; our positions are reversed, it is true, but I beg you to do the honours of the ball as though nothing had happened. Conciliation you will find to be the best policy.

MRS. BROWN. You are perhaps right, Mr. Benton. Ah, you are indeed an unexpected guest!—but a clever woman always knows how to make the best of adverse circumstances.

THE SKELETON IN THE CLOSET.

A Dramatic Trifle in one Act.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MR. HONEYMAN.

MRS. HONEYMAN.

MISS BLANCHE ELLIOT.

BESSIE.

THE SKELETON IN THE CLOSET.

SCENE I.

*A room in MR. HONEYMAN'S house, breakfast-table set,
MR. HONEYMAN, L., reading a newspaper, MRS.
HONEYMAN, R., playing with her tea-spoon.*

MRS. H. Richard—[*A pause.*] Richard, dear.
[*Another pause.*] [*Sharply,*]—Mr. Honeyman!

MR. H. [*Over his newspaper.*] Did you speak,
my dear?

MRS. H. Yes I did, my dear, and I wish to be
heard, if you please. You have scarcely touched
those drop cakes I was so particular about. Perhaps
you are not aware that I got up at seven o'clock this
morning on purpose to superintend their baking,
because you said that no one ever did make cakes
like your mother? Perhaps you are not aware that I
am always contriving, planning some little pleasure,
some little dainty for you? And what is my reward?
not a word, not a sign of thanks or even of acknow-

ledgment. There you have sat for nearly one mortal hour, occasionally swallowing cold coffee, and devouring the paper; at intervals edifying me with some such enjoyable particulars as: "Pork is active, my love—cheese is lively, gold at 247."

MR. H. But Hettie, dear, I thought you liked to hear the news.

MRS. H. News—news indeed! Oh, I wish I could rake together all the newspapers in the world and make one big bonfire of them, then, force all editors, Horace Greeley at their head, to dance a war dance by its light.

MR. H. [*Laughing.*] Why you savage-minded little woman! Now I think newspapers quite an institution.

MRS. H. Of course you do—of course you do! and that's the very heart of the trouble. People talk very finely of the wall of separation which so often exists between married people—Richard, that wall is built of newspapers. Poets sing of the winding-sheet of love—that winding-sheet is almost always—a newspaper!

MR. H. Bravo, little wife! I never knew before that I had married an orator. I shall have to look to my marital authority, which I think has grown rather rusty of late, or Miss Anna Dickinson will have to yield her laurels to you, and I shall have to

play the pleasant and dignified part of husband to a strong-minded woman. There [*Throws the newspaper away*] goes the bone of contention, and I have now leisure to tell you that your drop cakes were appreciated as they deserved, and that—by Jove! you have on the very stunningest of morning caps ever concocted—is that the right female word?

MRS. H. Any other man would have noticed it an hour ago! But if you promise to be very good, I will not scold any more.

MR. H. There's a model wife for you! The moment you abdicate all power and do her bidding with abject slavishness, she consents to be amiable. But where is the fair Miss Blanche Elliot all this time?

MRS. H. She begged to have her breakfast sent up to her, being very tired, so Bessie told me, after last night's dancing. I was not too tired to get up.

MR. H. You! I should think not, but you see you have the advantage of having a husband to look after. By the way, darling, are you and Miss Blanche quite as good friends as when you swore eternal friendship over your school bread-and-butter?

MRS. H. Good friends? Oh yes, of course—why do you ask?

MR. H. I fancied you only kissed one and twenty times a-day now, and it used to be at least twice that

number—very tantalising I can assure you for any male lookers-on. Miss Blanchè is certainly a very charming young lady.

MRS. H. Oh yes, no doubt—I thought you did not admire blondes?

MR. H. Oh, as to that, when I see a good-looking woman I never stop to inquire whether her eyes are black or blue.

MRS. H. Oh!

MR. H. Then she has golden charms, the trouble is she is too rich—always a great misfortune for a girl of spirit; there is her crotchety father, too, who will not allow her to marry plain Mr. Somebody, and as marquises and dukes are not quite as plentiful as novels or letters from Rome would lead us to suppose, he will have to be satisfied with a president, general, colonel, or major, as a son-in-law.

MRS. H. I should think it would be no difficult matter to find one at the rate they are being made.

SCENE II.

Enter BESSIE from R.

BESSIE. Please, sir, Miss Elliot wishes to know if you are disengaged, as she would like a few minutes' private conversation with you; she is in the library.

MRS. H. I thought you told me Miss Elliot was too tired to get up this morning.

BESSIE. So I did, ma'am; but she is up now and dressed to kill.

MR. H. That will do, Bessie. Tell Miss Elliot that I will attend her with pleasure. [BESSIE *curtseys and withdraws.*] My dear, you spoil that girl; it is always a mistake to admit a servant to any sort of familiarity.

MRS. H. [*Sitting on a stool by his side.*] Richard, my dear, I want you to stay with me—let me call Bessie back, and send word to Blanche that you are engaged.

MR. H. You must be dreaming, Hettie! What engagement could I plead?—that I want to smoke a cigar?

MRS. H. It is so long since we have had a nice cosy chat, somehow Blanche always comes between us.

MR. H. Now, Hettie, I do believe you are jealous of your dear friend.

MRS. H. Jealous!

MR. H. We must be polite to our guest; it was you who invited her you know.

MRS. H. I know—I know; but do not let us talk of her just now. Richard, dear, I have been thinking of those happy days at Newport—do you know

that it will be just one year next Thursday since we were married ?

MR. H. Am I likely to forget the day on which I signed away my independence, and gave myself into the hands of a hard-hearted despot ? Oh, for the halcyon time when I could visit charming young ladies, unquestioned, unwatched !

MRS. H. Do you remember those loves of slippers we saw at Jones's ? I have been working them for you, dear—I meant to keep it a secret till Thursday, but it is so difficult for me to keep a secret from you.

MR. H. Yes, little wife, and with all your witcheries you want to make it still more difficult for me to keep an appointment.

MRS. H. Just a little longer, she can wait.

MR. H. Nonsense, Hettie ! I should infinitely prefer staying here, of course, but I must go.

MRS. H. Richard, if you care for me you will stay ; see, you must choose between her and me.

MR. H. I shall get angry, dear, if you insist on making such a fuss over a trifle.

MRS. H. It is no trifle, sir ; what your wife has at heart should be no trifle to you.

MR. H. You ridiculous little puss ! Shall I buy you a new bonnet to make my peace ?

MRS. H. Let me call Blanche in here then, she

ought to have no secrets with you that I ought not to hear.

MR. H. That is her affair, not mine or yours; let me go, Hettie.

MRS. H. Richard, it is such a little thing, I ask. Stay with me.

MR. H. And break my word? [*Gets up.*] Let me go, child!

MRS. H. Once more, can you refuse me what I ask?

MR. H. I can—and do—

MRS. H. Richard, I hate you!

MR. H. *Au revoir*, dearest.

[*Exit R.*]

SCENE III.

MRS. H. *alone, then BESSIE, who, after the first few words, comes in, listens, and watches.*

MRS. H. [*Throwing herself on the sofa.*] I could tear her hair out, I could! But what is the use of my anger, I am so powerless!

BESSIE. [*Aside.*] Now's my time. If I help her, I may get that grey dress of hers.

MRS. H. It's all quite clear—I have lost his affection, and she with her arts—Oh, misery—misery!

BESSIE. You are not well, ma'am ; shall I get you anything ?

MRS. H. Oh, Bessie, Bessie ! I'm so miserable !

BESSIE. Yes, ma'am, I know all about it, I've seen it all along——

MRS. H. Seen what, Bessie,—know what ?

BESSIE. What is it makes you so sad, ma'am ? answer me that, and you'll answer your own questions too.

MRS. H. Of course you know it, everybody must know it ; I shall be an object of pity and contempt to everybody. Oh, Bessie, how I hate her !

BESSIE. I should think so : a stuck-up thing, thinking of nothing in the world but her face and her dress, and stealing husbands' hearts away from their wives.

MRS. H. Bessie, something must be done—she shall leave the house. But he, too, must suffer. I wish I could make him endure the misery I am now suffering.

BESSIE. [*Confidentially.*] If I were you, ma'am, I would——there's nothing easier.

MRS. H. What do you mean ?

BESSIE. Make him jealous.

MRS. H. But, Bessie, how can I ? I never cared for any one else.

BESSIE. That's of no consequence.

MRS. H. Well, but how?

BESSIE. Just listen to me, ma'am. My young man, Joe,—that is, not him as is my young man now, nor him as was my young man a month ago, but the one afore. Well, as I was saying, ma'am, Joe took me to the play quite often, and somehow I always noticed the husbands or lovers always went into fits of jealousy and then into fits of remorse—and it was all along of a closet and a man in it—now I was thinking——

MRS. H. Nonsense, Bessie! I won't listen to any more such rubbish; what is fit for a vulgar fourth-rate play, is not fit for me.

BESSIE. But ma'am, I can arrange it so nicely; my young man—or we might dress up the broomstick; I have seen that done with success.

MRS. H. Not another word!

BESSIE. Oh, of course, ma'am, just as you like, only if I was you I would keep my eyes open and my ears too, for that matter. I might say things as would make your hair stand on end; but if I and my young man are to be snubbed like that, why——

MRS. H. Oh, Bessie, do not you turn against me too!

BESSIE. No more I will, ma'am, if you will only listen to advice. I am but a servant, I know, but a

T

servant can have a heart, ma'am, though—though master did say, as I overheard this morning, and couldn't help it——

MRS. H. Never mind, Bessie, I will make it up to you. I do not want that grey dress of mine, and——

BESSIE. For which I'm very much obliged to you, ma'am, I'm sure [*curtseys*]; and I will tell you what I heard this morning; I went up to Miss Blanche's room to help her dress, and there she was a smiling in her sleep, and saying to herself, "Richard, dear, dear Richard!" just like that.

MRS. H. You heard that?

BESSIE. That I did, ma'am.

MRS. H. Bessie, I will do anything—anything!

BESSIE. That's what I call a proper spirit.

MRS. H. [*Getting up.*] Just put these breakfast things away and then come to my room.

[*Exit hastily, L.*]

SCENE IV.

BESSIE *alone.*

BESSIE. There I have her and her dress, too! Poor creature! I declare it's too bad though,—not one year married! But such is matrimony, as Mi-

randa in 'The firebrand of the domestic hearth' said to Rolando the Terrible. Catch me in such a fix! I'll keep my young man hanging on until I get another; but as to marrying, not I! as long as my hair don't want dyeing. [*Puts breakfast things away.*] "A mistake to admit a servant to any sort of familiarity," is it, sir? I owe you one for that, and it won't be my fault if you don't pass an uncomfortable hour or two, that's all! There they come, as deep in conversation as if they were the only two beings in the world. A little watching, and then to my mistress to report progress.

[*Exit L.*

SCENE V.

MR. HONEYMAN *and* MISS ELLIOT *in conversation from R.*

BLANCHE. I cannot express to you, Mr. Honeyman, how very much obliged I am to you for the interest you have taken in my affairs: you have indeed proved yourself a true friend.

MR. H. My dear Miss Blanche, there is always a leaven of selfishness in all our actions; the companionship and friendship of a very charming young lady is more than sufficient reward for any-

thing I may have been so fortunate as to do toward forwarding your interests. [*Kisses her hand.*]

BESSIE. [*Putting forward her head.*] O my! [*Exit.*]

MR. H. I am rejoiced to think that a few hours more will end your suspense. You feel quite sure that your father's opposition will cease as soon as——

BLANCHE. Oh yes, quite sure. You know it is a crotchet of his; once yield to him on that one point, and he would not think of thwarting my inclinations. But I am quite angry with Mr. Ryerson for insisting so on secrecy—such complete secrecy. It is true, a certain amount of circumspection was necessary, but I should so have liked to share my secret with dear Hettie; it would have been so nice to talk it all over together. Oh, you gentlemen do not know the comfort we women have in talking things over! I shall have to give Richard a good lecture for his mistrust of our sex's power of secrecy. In one of his last letters he said, "I have the greatest and most affectionate regard for Mrs. Honeyman, but she is a woman, and, being such, must talk—so pray keep it a secret even from her." By the way, how singular that your christian names should be alike!

Mr. H. Very; but if I stop talking here I shall never get that telegram off—not that it is really necessary; I think we need have no fear of failure

now. Mind you invite me to the wedding, and let me be among the first to salute Mrs. General Ryerson.

BLANCHE. That you shall! You and Hettie shall ever be my dearest friends.

MR. H. [*Aside.*] Humph! I wonder if Hettie would subscribe to that sentiment at this present moment? [*Exit, R.*]

SCENE VI.

MISS ELLIOT, *alone.*

BLANCHE. [*Sitting down and taking up some work.*] How thankful I shall be when all this suspense is over! I have been scarcely myself for the last week or so. I am sure Hettie must have noticed the change in me; and, now I think of it, she was not as affectionate to me last night as usual. Ah, Richard, Richard! how much you will have to answer for if you are the means of cooling off our friendship! Now that my mind is comparatively at ease, I must try and get her to come and have a nice talk. Yes; as soon as I have worked one flower, I shall go and find her. Just about one flower in this embroidery a day is my share in the hard labour of the world. Heigh-ho! what useless creatures we young ladies are.

SCENE VII.

Enter MRS. HONEYMAN, slowly, L.

MRS. H. [*Aside.*] He kissed her hand! Bessie saw him kiss her hand! And yet we must be friends, and call each other "dear;" but I will be doubly affectionate, and make her betray herself. [*Leaning over her chair.*] Well, darling, quite rested after last night's brilliant conquests?

BLANCHE. How you startled me, Hettie! Good morning,—good morning, my dearest! [*They kiss.*] I was just going to run after you; I have been longing to have a nice cosy time with you for ever so long. [*They sit.*]

MRS. H. [*Aside.*] The hypocrite! [*Aloud.*] How sweet you look, Blanche, dear! One might almost think some one had given you a piece of good news this morning, or—or made love to you! What a funny idea! [*Laughs.*]

BLANCHE. At this time of day!—it would be like having champagne at breakfast! And yet, what if I were to whisper just one little word——

MRS. H. What! Surely my Blanche could not be so cruel as to have a lover without telling me of it? Fie!

BLANCHE. Oh, of course not—of course not ! But, dear, could you not imagine that there might be circumstances——

MRS. H. [*Hotly.*] Not unless that love were an injury—an insult to your best friend. [*Laughs.*] Don't look frightened, darling, but just let me put you through what we used to call the 'Girls' Catechism.' Of whom did you dream last night ?

BLANCHE. [*Embarrassed.*] I dream last night ? Why, Hettie, you know—that is—it is so difficult to remember dreams ; they are such confused things.

MRS. H. [*Aside.*] The viper ! [*Aloud.*] Well, never mind, dearest ; let us proceed to the next question. Which is your favourite name for a man ?

BLANCHE. [*Quickly.*] Richard !—that is, I don't know—William, or Tom, or Edward are all good names ;—don't you think so, pet ?

MRS. H. I think Richard the nicest, of course,—and—and I am so much obliged to you, Blanche, for preferring my husband's name—that is a proof of your friendship which I appreciate as it deserves. But to continue my questions—why were you smiling just now to yourself, and why were you so startled when I spoke to you ?

BLANCHE. Because—because my thoughts were far, far away ; because I was plunged in those rosy dreams which come but once in a lifetime ; because,

Hettie, I was so happy. [*Puts her arms around her neck.*] [MRS. H. *screams and hides her face in her hands.*] What is the matter, Hettie?

MRS. H. Oh, nothing. [*Laughing.*] What a goose I am to make such a fuss about a trifle! It was only one of those horrid pins in your dress that pricked me. It is nothing,—oh, nothing at all, I assure you! You were saying——

BLANCHE. Hettie, will you trust me so far? I can merely tell you that the only obstacle to my love is about to be removed.

MRS. H. [*Aside.*] Are they going to murder me? and does she tell me of it in cold blood?

BLANCHE. But you are not well, Hettie; I am sure you are not well. You must have hurt yourself very much—you look so strangely.

MRS. H. [*Sinking on the sofa.*] Yes, I am hurt—badly hurt.

BLANCHE. Darling, let me go for your husband——

MRS. H. [*Violently,*] No!—forgive me, Blanche, I am not myself; quiet is all that I need. Leave me, dearest! We will resume this conversation on some more fitting occasion.

BLANCHE. Can I do nothing for you?

MRS. H. Send Bessie to me. [*Exit MISS E., R.*

SCENE VIII.

MRS. HONEYMAN, BESSIE.

MRS. H. [*Starting to her feet.*] Oh! I will be guilty of every perfidy rather than he should escape unscathed. As to her—but how could she help loving him! O my husband! [BESSIE comes in from L.]

BESSIE. Don't take on so, ma'am; they're not worth it, they're not!

MRS. H. What shall I do, Bessie? I am quite ready——

BESSIE. Now you see, ma'am, this is my plan. Since you won't hear of the broomstick dressed up—though it does have a fine effect—why you must be satisfied with making believe, as the children say. Then here is that old pair of gloves, left at the last party, and which the owner was ashamed to claim, and no wonder! These we put with artistic carelessness on the table, just where master will be sure to see them; then just you make a parade of standing before that closet where his coats hang—look flurried like, and the thing's done! But there he comes; now's your time, ma'am. Keep up your spirit.

[*Exit, L.*]

SCENE IX.

MR. HONEYMAN *from R.* MRS. HONEYMAN.

MR. H. [*Aside.*] Now I suppose I'm in for a lecture—it is awkward not to be able to tell her.

MRS. H. [*Smiling and flurried.*] Well, my dear, what have you been doing with yourself since dinner?

MR. H. Dinner! Why it is not more than twelve o'clock, and we dine at four. What are you thinking about, little wife?

MRS. H. Oh of course—yes! Can I do anything for you? It is such a fine day, I should think you would like a walk.

MR. H. Fine day! It is raining fast; but, as it happens, I have to go out. Just hand me my umbrella, dear—it is in that closet.

MRS. H. [*Starts.*] Oh no, dear, you are quite mistaken. I saw your umbrella on the kitchen stove—it is not in the closet, I assure you.

MR. H. [*Laughing.*] On the stove! Why, you mad little woman [*feeling in his pockets*—where the deuce have I put my gloves? I certainly thought—ah! here is a pair. [*Looks at them.*] Queer-looking customers these! Why, Hettie, these are not my gloves, are they? [*Puts them on, they are much too*

large.] Look, Hettie! [*Laughs.*] Whose concerns are these, do you know? How the dickens did they get on this table?

MRS. H. [*Much agitated.*] Richard, dear Richard, I don't know! I assure you I don't know!

MR. H. Well, I do not suppose you do, my dear; but what is the matter? You seem agitated. Anything gone wrong? Just let me get to that closet; I must have my umbrella; I am in a hurry.

MRS. H. [*Screams, and throws herself in front of him.*] You shall not!—you shall not!

MR. H. [*Retreats and looks at his wife in amazement.*] Are you mad, Hettie?—or are you playing some dreadful joke on me? Neither a very witty nor a very new one, I must say. [*Throws down the gloves angrily.*] I gave you credit for more good taste.

MRS. H. [*Bursting into tears.*] Oh, Richard, Richard!

MR. H. [*Dragging her forward.*] What is the meaning of this? Tears! Mystery! Hettie, speak! [*A pause.*] Tell me, once for all, that this is some stupid tomfoolery. No answer yet? Are you the guileless loving girl whom I was so proud to make my wife? or has this been a pretty part, acted to deceive me, by a—Madness!

MRS. H. Let me go, sir! Before accusing me, see

that your own conscience is clear. Oh! it is easy to see who made the laws that govern mankind. If we forget, for one moment, the lessons so often preached to us—if we do not play the old hypocrite game of constant smiles and sweet good humour—if we ask the why and wherefore of things—if, maddened by neglect, by outrage, by the insult of acts if not of words, we seek elsewhere the love that is due to us from our husbands—then hear the hue and cry of the scandalized world! But with you, the masters of the earth, the lawgivers of the world, how is it? You may abuse the trust so lovingly confided in you; you may, under your wife's own eyes, seek and win another's love; and if the wife do but complain, against whom does society raise the rod? Against him? Oh, no! Once more, against her, the complaining, impatient creature. She should try to win him back by gentleness; she should hide her wrongs, and not trumpet them to the world. Oh, this is fine justice!

MR. H. Hettie, there must be some terrible mistake, some cruel misunderstanding here. You are not acting now; those are real tears. Explain!

MRS. H. I neither can nor will.

MR. H. Is that your last word?

MRS. H. My very last!

MR. H. Good-bye, then.

MRS. H. Good-bye!

MR. H. [*Moves towards the door, then returns.*]
Hettie, I cannot believe my senses. All this is a bad dream. You, my wife, my darling, mixed up in some vulgar love affair! It is simply absurd. If you were to tell it me yourself I should scarcely believe it. Let me—— [*Goes toward the closet.*]

MRS. H. [*Violently.*] Do not go there—I forbid it!

MR. H. [*Bowing.*] I have the honour to wish you good day, Mrs. Honeyman. [*Exit, R.*]

SCENE X.

MRS. HONEYMAN.

MRS. H. What have I gained? I thought it would be such a triumph to make him suffer too—a miserable triumph! Oh, Richard, Richard! He does not hear me. Oh! [*Weeps.*] [*Exit, L.*]

SCENE XI.

MISS ELLIOT *with telegram.*

BLANCHE. Oh, Hettie! Hettie, dear! She does not hear me. How dejected she looks! What can have happened? I have been hunting everywhere for

Mr. Honeyman, who, it seems, has locked himself up in his study. Ah, well! a lovers' quarrel, I suppose. I had better accustom myself to such things. [*Reads over telegram.*] So he has been successful. Thanks to the influence of Mr. Honeyman and other friends, his merits have been acknowledged, and he has been chosen among all his competitors; and now my father, though he objected to plain Richard Ryerson, will have no excuse for refusing Brigadier-General Ryerson as son-in-law. My dear, good Richard! |

SCENE XII.

Enter MRS. HONEYMAN.

MRS. H. I heard it myself this time.

BLANCHE. Oh, my dear Hettie!

MRS. H. Your dear Hettie! Wicked girl! So you can stand there, with your assumption of innocence—stand before me, whom you have deceived, outraged—and not blush!

BLANCHE. Are you mad, Hettie? Is it to me that you address such words?

MRS. H. I am not mad; though I wonder that your cruel duplicity has not driven me so.

BLANCHE. If you will only listen to me with a little patience.

MRS. H. Patience! And you can talk to me of patience!

BLANCHE. It was not my fault, I assure you, Hettie. Richard would not allow me to tell you—

MRS. H. I do not suppose he would, madam. It is not likely he would have me chosen as the confidant of his intrigue.

BLANCHE. Intrigue! Whom is it you wish to insult, Mrs. Honeyman?

MRS. H. Since you have insulted me in act, I feel myself at liberty to insult you in words, Miss Elliot—a weak and insufficient revenge, I allow.

BLANCHE. But, Hettie, there must be some incomprehensible mistake here. I assure you that it was quite against my will.

MRS. H. Poor, innocent, weak thing that you are! carried away by the force of fascination. Oh! your sight is hateful to me!

BLANCHE. With all my desire to bring about an understanding, Mrs. Honeyman, it is impossible for me to listen to such language. I shall have to beg Mr. Honeyman to interfere.

MRS. H. A proper mediator, indeed! Why, girl, you must be lost to all feeling of shame!

BLANCHE. How dare you! how dare you speak to me in such a way!—to me, your old school-friend—to me who was this moment going to you in all

confidence, to tell you of the happy issue of my love! It is too cruel! I cannot remain one hour longer under this roof. [*Calls.*] Bessie! Bessie!

SCENE XIII.

Enter BESSIE, running in from L.

BLANCHE. Bessie, come with me quickly, and help me to pack. I leave this place as soon as my things can be huddled together. Your mistress has insulted me, and she shall find that I am not one to be insulted with impunity. The time will come, Mrs. Honeyman, when you will bitterly repent your conduct. *Exit, R.*

BESSIE. You look ill, ma'am; you have allowed yourself to be too much put out by that fly-away miss. Not a step will I stir to pack up her traps. It won't hurt her to do a little work herself.

MRS. H. No, no, Bessie! you must go; and mind you behave politely to her. She is going away, that is the main thing.

BESSIE. Well, ma'am, if you say so. [*Exit, R.*

SCENE XIV.

MRS. HONEYMAN, *alone*; then MR. HONEYMAN, *from R.*

MRS. H. My head burns so, I can hardly think. How did it all come about? She did not seem overwhelmed by the sense of her guilt. And what was it she said about wanting to confide? Oh, my head! my head! I think I have not strength enough now even to be angry. There, I hear Richard's step! What shall I do? I must appear calm. [*Takes a book.*]

MR. HONEYMAN *comes in.*

MR. H. [*After a pause.*] I am going, Hettie. I leave by the next train for Washington. You know my address there. I shall expect to receive a full explanation of this morning's events. If within a fortnight I do not receive such an explanation——

MRS. H. What then, Mr. Honeyman?

MR. H. Why, then I shall be forced to instruct my lawyer to make all arrangements necessary for a separation. Oh, Hettie, Hettie! how can you take such pains to break up the happiness of two beings, when a word, a look, would, I feel more and more convinced, clear away all suspicion?

MRS. H. Am I the only one who should make explanations?

MR. H. On my honour you are! Your vague accusations against me I do not even understand.

MRS. H. I have proofs—proofs—

MR. H. Of what?

MRS. H. I would not lower myself by speaking more explicitly. Do not let us prolong this painful interview; we had better part.

MR. H. As you will; good-bye.

MRS. H. Good-bye. [*He turns to go. She hides her face, sobbing.*] Oh, Richard, Richard! [*He stands irresolute.*]

SCENE XV.

Enter MISS ELLIOT and BESSIE running from R.

BLANCHE. [*Excitedly.*] I can explain everything now. Mr. Honeyman—Hettie, Hettie dear!

BESSIE. Yes, ma'am; everything was turned wrong side out and now it's turned right side out again, and Richard was not Richard at all but somebody else—and please ma'am I never will try to imitate the folks at the theatre, no—that I won't—never more!

MRS. H. } But explain——

MR. H. } I do not understand.

BLANCHE. Hettie! you dear, foolish, jealous, little wife you! How could you be so unjust to us, and especially so unjust to yourself? Perhaps it will

make things clearer to you when I say that I am engaged to Richard Ryerson, who has just been named Brigadier-General in the United States army. I have been more or less in love with him ever since the war broke out, but I could not openly engage myself before, on account of my father's foolish prejudices. I wanted to tell you all about it a long time ago, but Richard objected so strongly to it that I yielded the point. Now do you understand, dear, that my conferences with your husband related to the wire-pulling at the War Office in Washington, which has ended so fortunately for us? Now do you understand that the Richard of my dreams was not your Richard at all, but my very own? What, pet? did you think I could satisfy myself with half a man?

MRS. H. Oh, Blanche! how can you ever forgive me. What shall I say?

BLANCHE. Just nothing at all—let this short misunderstanding so cement our friendship, that it may prove a constant reproach to those who scoff at bread-and-butter affection.

MR. H. Hettie, if I wait much longer I shall be late for the train.

MRS. H. Richard, I scarcely know how to find words.

[Crosses over.]

BESSIE. Never mind, ma'am, I'll find them for

you. You see, Mr. Honeyman, sir, my mistress was very miserable, and I saw it, and thinking to make things better, I just made them worse. It did not turn out at all as at the theatre! Well, I told missus that the best way to make things square again, was to make you as jealous as she was herself, and there you understand, sir, the gloves came in. I wanted most particular to dress up the broomstick, but missus didn't take to the idea, so she just made believe, and she did it pretty well considering—I don't mind confessing that I was behind the door, there—and so, sir, that's all about it, and if you blame anybody blame me; for I can bear it, having good shoulders of my own. [*Curtseys.*]

MR. H. Since it has all turned out well, Bessie, I shall not scold you—wherein you see the moral of success, only do not repeat the experiment. Well, little wife, is peace to be restored?

MRS. H. Oh, Richard! I was so miserable, I did not know what I was doing.

MR. H. Of course not—but now as this is the time for good resolutions, I for my part promise not to read the newspaper at breakfast; and for your part, my dear, pray never create another Skeleton in the Closet.

Curtain falls.

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